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Mercredi
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 18 November 2026

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 18 novembre 2026

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Good morning, everyone. Let's pause for a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Let us pray.

Prayers.

REPORT, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that the following document was tabled: a report entitled Ontario Economic Monitor: April to September 2026, from the office of the Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECT ONTARIO FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 VISANT À PROTÉGER LES FAMILLES ET LES COLLECTIVITÉS EN ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 17, 2026, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 148, An Act to enact the Intimate Images Protection Act, 2026 and to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 148, Loi édictant la Loi de 2026 sur la protection des images intimes et modifiant diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Further debate.

Ms. Jess Dixon: Thank you so much, Speaker, and I'm so appreciative, again, of being able to speak to this act. As I said in my remarks yesterday, I'm focusing on the portion of the bill particularly about the intimate image abuse prevention act, but also some of the associated aspects related to that act.

One of the things that I wanted to talk about was how impressed and grateful I am to see the work that was done by the Standing Committee on Justice Policy regarding intimate partner violence and sexual violence getting the attention that it has been getting and seeing the responses that we've been getting. I have the report here, and when I go to the section on civil legal remedies for victims, I actually want to talk about something that was from a recent piece of legislation as well, because I feel like some of the connections may have gotten a little bit missed. I really want to emphasize them because I'm so appreciative of the work that's been done by the ministers in this area.

As we've discussed in the House recently, this bill creates a statutory tort of intimate image abuse in Ontario, and as I described yesterday, it's a very comprehensive tort, as torts go. One of the interesting pieces about it is that one of the challenges in intimate image abuse is that the proliferation of these images can sometimes be done by an individual that is unknown to the victim. They may only know them by a username or an email or a phone number or a date that something was posted. This piece of legislation allows a victim to file even without information like the identity of the perpetrator because it allows the court the opportunity to use some of that information, such as a username, to issue orders and directives to third parties, platforms, social media companies etc., to produce information that would allow for that person to be specifically contacted.

It also is putting in some fairly hefty damages and fines. If an order is issued to an individual or to a corporation—and again, these are not even necessarily final orders; these are injunctions and intermediary orders—for an individual, that person can be liable to fines of up to $10,000, and for a corporation, $1,000,000. I want to note for that fine, the offence reoccurs for every single day that the image or video remains posted. So every day that the image is not brought down is an additional $10,000-a-day potential liability for an individual or an up to $1,000,000-a-day potential liability for a corporation. That's in addition to the damages for compensation, punitive damages etc.

I also want to note again, because it was just passed a couple of days ago, with Bill 119, we had another recommendation from the IPV report that was put into place, which was recommendation 5.4.2, to create the statutory tort of harassment in Ontario. This is something that we really did need. It's not uncommon in these types of cases for a victim to potentially not want to go through a police process or for the conduct to struggle to reach the criminal burden of proof of beyond a reasonable doubt. However, in a civil proceeding, again, it is the victim's own proceeding and only has to reach a balance of probabilities, which is a much lower standard of proof.

I also wanted to note another thing that happened in Bill 119, which I think is relevant to the conversation that we're having today and also plays into how important the intimate image abuse tort is: Bill 119 has also updated Ontario's human trafficking restraining orders. These are orders which I don't think get nearly enough attention for how incredible they are and what an incredible tool they are. They were put in place by this government as part of the anti-human trafficking legislation, and as anybody that has dug into human trafficking at all knows, it's a notori-

ously difficult to prove and prosecute case. The anti-human trafficking protection orders allow for counsel to be able to apply on behalf of a victim without the victim ever having to testify or go to court. Again, as I said, it's a lower standard of proof.

But I think something that might have been missed which is really, really relevant in this entire discussion is that the newly updated legislation about the human trafficking restraining orders also now expressly includes online sexual exploitation, so the non-consensual recording and distribution of intimate images or audio. I know, certainly, in the work that I do and the research that I do, it sometimes seems that there is no limit to the depths that you can plumb as far as human conduct. But an entirely new type of abuse and human trafficking is entirely online, with things like OnlyFans, which are now having essentially virtual pimps as well. So this is a really, really important piece of legislation that might have gotten a little bit lost and gives another really important tool as far as being able to punish and deter this type of conduct.

But again, I think what I want people to really draw from this legislation, from the creation of the statutory tort of intimate image abuse, from the statutory tort of harassment, from the updates made to the human trafficking restraining orders is what I talked about yesterday, which is that the creation of legislation and tools such as this, they don't exist simply as a tool to punish conduct or to deter conduct or limit conduct; they also, I think, exist as a very powerful way for the government, for community as a whole to make it clear what type of conduct is and is not acceptable in our society.

As I spoke about when I began my remarks yesterday, in that sextortion case that was an extortion charge because none of these offences even existed yet, I had to come up with everything I could think of in order to convince a judge that a man threatening to disclose an intimate video of a girl to her father was something that was abhorrent and immoral and wrong, and like I said, although I won that case, I still won it on the basis of putting him into the position of being the girl's father. I will say, I didn't win it on the basis of proving how terrible the threat and the conduct was itself.

0910

So when I think about the time that has passed—it's been 16 years now—and I look at where we are as far as having the Criminal Code legislation, the provincial legislation, Ontario picking this up—as I said, Ontario's legislation in this area, as far as intimate image abuse and the tort, I think really sets a standard for the rest of the provinces. We were out of step; we are now ahead. I will have no hesitation in voting in favour of this legislation.

Again, I'm so grateful for the attention and the response that the intimate partner violence report has been receiving.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I want to thank the member across for this work. We know that deepfakes are a very challenging, important and problematic issue, and so I want to commend the member across for bringing this piece of legislation.

I did want to note that, last night, I was on a panel discussion around intimate partner violence, and one of the questions that we had was, why have so many municipalities declared intimate partner violence an epidemic and the province has not? I wondered if the member could speak to why this bill didn't include that piece in the legislation.

Ms. Jess Dixon: I would say it's because we gave a very comprehensive answer to that, which is included in the 900 or so pages of this report.

As we talked about in the House and as we, in fact, passed a motion on, the province declared intimate partner violence endemic in the province of Ontario, and the reason we did that is because that is actually a harder word than "epidemic." "Epidemic" requires a one-time response, an announcement, an injection of funding. Declaring something endemic, as intimate partner violence is, recognizes that it is something that is embedded, it is systemic, it persists through all ages, all cultures, all economic brackets, every place in the world, and any response to it has to be something that is as committed and multi-faceted as intimate partner violence is itself.

So my response would be that the province has acknowledged the true nature of gender-based violence as something that requires combat on every front, and I've been very proud to be part of that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Ottawa–Vanier.

M^me^ Lucille Collard: Thank you to the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler for many explanations that are useful for us to understand; namely, I think you provided a response to a question I had yesterday about how we may implement the removal orders for the publication of intimate images. I think that's very important, to have fines, but you also mentioned that sometimes the victims don't know who the people are, and we know that once an image gets on the Internet, it's very difficult—even if we can identify the person and force them to take it down, it may have gotten in different hands, and then it's just impossible to do anything. Are there any measures in this bill that would help go further and really make sure that we can address that and really implement a removal order?

Ms. Jess Dixon: This bill allows for a number of different takedown orders. Ultimately, I will say, when you get into telecommunications, there is an aspect that is exclusively federal jurisdiction, so to me, this is the province going as far as it absolutely can under jurisdictional limits.

But what I want to note is, there have been some studies about the effectiveness of takedown orders. At the University of Michigan, they had a test where they had AI-generated nude images on X that had not been removed in over three weeks when they were reported using X's own policy, but when they were reported under a legal takedown notice, they were all removed within 24 hours, and we see that time and time again. Obviously, there are always bad actors, but takedown orders such as what are in this bill, as I said, also allow, even when we don't know the exact identity of the perpetrator—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: I want to thank the member for her very detailed comments on this particular bill and the work that she has done leading up to this, but I also want to ask the member about how this builds on other measures this government has done not only to support education, support women, lift up communities that are vulnerable, build on human trafficking etc. and how this complements all those efforts so we can continue when it comes to wraparound supports and helping those most in need: children and women in our communities.

Ms. Jess Dixon: I think a lot of the measures in this bill, including the tort, are about identifying gaps in the legislation, places where children or vulnerable people could slip through or where perpetrators could continue unchecked; when we look at the aspects of the bill about workers that have committed sexual abuse or sexual violence, the consequences for that, the reporting for that; looking at alternative dispute resolution. I remember that from first-year law school; that's something that you're taught. I think interest-versus-position-based negotiation probably remains one of the most valuable things I've ever been taught. But it's also very important, I think, to make sure that people are aware of those alternative measures.

So I think, again, there's a number of things in this bill that are about filling gaps that are there to protect—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Thank you.

Further questions?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to ask the member about sections 13 and 14 in this bill, which indemnify the government against any legal action being taken as a result of their unfair and arbitrary suspension of OSAP for career college students. I wonder if the reason for these legal protections is because of the real possibility of legal action taken against the government by career college students who are facing financial disaster as a result of the government's action, or maybe it's legal action by career colleges who have had to shut down, or maybe it's to protect the government against claims to the TCAF fund by career college students who are out of pocket thousands of dollars as a result of this government's acting. So can the member shed some light as to why those legal protections are included?

Ms. Jess Dixon: The minister has made it clear over and over and over again in this House that OSAP is an incredibly important program for Ontario students. Unfortunately, as we have seen, parts of it fell victim to bad actors and potential fraudulent conduct. I think the minister has made it clear that they are doing their absolute best to protect Ontario students and protect the program into the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thank you to the member for this bill and the process of fast-tracking court applications from victims who are trying to get their images removed. Knowing people who have been victim to this, is there a way you can explain how this process can avoid revictimization of these people who have lived through this? The onus is always on them to make the move in court to try to protect themselves, so how can you tell us that this makes it that much easier to deal with this without feeling revictimized?

Ms. Jess Dixon: I think the main thing to say is, up until this, there was no process. The only theoretical process that would have existed would be a criminal complaint, which would require speaking to a police officer, charges being laid, becoming part of that entire process. This is something that allows an adult who is the subject of the image to apply, somebody that is a custodian for a child or a parent for a child, and it's just an application that goes before a JP to start the process. So it's not even like a peace bond, where there isn't even a complicated process where you have to actually go to court and stand there and wait. It's meant to be a fast-track process. It will be determined more in regulation, but I think this is a really, really big step forward when it comes to trying to pause that increase of victimization that can happen and then having to take the steps to respond.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler for her remarks. I know the member has been involved quite extensively with organizations and groups throughout the province that have supported victims of intimate partner violence.

We know that under Premier Ford's leadership, our government has made significant investments to prevent gender-based violence and support survivors through Ontario-STANDS. We are continuing this work through the Protect Ontario Families and Communities Act, 2026, with measures that will help protect vulnerable individuals and the places that they turn to for safety and support.

0920

Through you, Speaker, can the member speak to our government's commitment to building an Ontario-STANDS continuation and broadening this important work?

Ms. Jess Dixon: As I said earlier today, the very fact that I'm holding a copy of the report and able to pick out recommendations that today are being put in place, that, with the harassment tort were put in place in recent days, I think is fabulous.

We've also talked a little bit about the sexually exploited youth screening tool, the SEY tool, that the minister referenced somewhat—not specifically referenced in the report, but what we did reference in the report was how important it is to start standardizing screening tools, and the recommendation noted in the report that there was no standardized screening tool for youth at risk of sex trafficking. So again, I'm just seeing more and more examples of commitment to making sure that we make change for victims and survivors in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's an honour for me to rise to add the voices of the great people of London North Centre on this government's Protect Ontario Families and Communities Act.

As we look at Bill 148, I honestly have to say I feel embarrassed for my colleagues across the aisle that they're so unable to voice their concerns about some of the more odious and disgraceful parts of this bill. Of course, there are parts of this bill that are absolutely supportable and ones that this government, had they the backbone and the moral fibre and the moral character, would be able to introduce outside of a piece of omnibus legislation with 18-some-odd schedules.

It's really a sad state of democracy in the province of Ontario that actions such as these have to be cloaked in omnibus bills. This bill—it's paying it a compliment to say it is a dog's breakfast. It's very much flooding the zone, distracting people from their actions with certain obvious actions and certain other ones which are, quite frankly, disturbing.

The question remains: Why do things like this need to be hidden? Where is the integrity in this government disguising their intent? If you're not doing something wrong, you really don't need legislation to inoculate yourself, to indemnify yourself, from legal action—I withdraw.

At what point, I have to ask, when it comes to Career Colleges Ontario, did Conservatives stop filling their pockets with donations from those bad-acting private career colleges and finally admit that there was an issue in the sector? There were warnings from the Auditor General in 2021 and in 2022. There were warnings from Career Colleges Ontario, and yet they embarked upon this investigation with KPMG and still have waited so long. And students are paying the price.

Within this bill, there is no relief for students who are currently waiting for their OSAP, who currently have their studies paused.

Just a few days ago in this chamber, I introduced stories of people from my riding, including Joel and Ciara, who wanted to better their life, who wanted to improve things for their family, who quit jobs, who were relying on OSAP to look after five children as a single parent, in the case of Joel. And because of this government and because of their mishandling, because they did not read the writing that was on the wall that was brought to them years ago, they have made these students suffer.

But I really wanted to think about this issue of legal indemnification. Speaker, if you're going out for the day and there's a very minimal chance of rain, you probably won't take a raincoat. However, with the balance of probabilities, if you're certain that there is going to be rain, most definitely you would wear a raincoat. In this manner, Conservatives have changed the law to protect themselves, and I would have to say that perhaps it's based upon their previous actions. Why, as well, would you need—withdrawn.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I will ask the member to be cautious in his parliamentary language.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I shall be cautious in my parliamentary language.

But why would you need to protect yourself against—why would the government need to protect itself in this manner? And why would it also need to do so retroactively? It really speaks to the fact that this government must know that, based on its actions, it was going to be sued. It must know this. It must be aware of this, just like that raincoat. It knows that these actions were going to be coming, so therefore it had to inoculate itself. It had to protect itself. It had to make sure that it would not be dragged before a court of law. And what a shame that is, Speaker; a government should not need to legally protect itself against actions such as these.

I also think, in this manner, an analogy I would like to make is that—I heard this from a former superintendent in my area of London North Centre. They had said that in areas of the city which might be a little bit more rough, children who are playing a game don't require adult supervision. If someone is misbehaving, if someone has broken the rules, they take care of it themselves—maybe in perhaps a little bit of a rough way, but they can mind themselves; they can look after themselves. However, sometimes in places where the children are born with silver spoons in their mouths, they need half as many adults as there are children just to manage the issues.

So, Speaker, this government just seems to always want to change the rules. They want to manipulate the playbook. They want to make sure that they can get away with things that may or may not have happened in the past. One would not need to do this if one was acting nobly and accountably.

I would also say that it does beg the question: What finally tipped this government over the edge into finally acting on private Career Colleges Ontario? As we all are aware in this chamber, warnings were placed in 2021, 2023 and as well with Career Colleges Ontario. What finally made this government just go over the edge and realize they had to act?

I would ask the question: Did the donations from private career colleges stop at that point? Is that when they said, "Okay, fine, since we're not being able to stuff our pockets anymore with private career college money, maybe we need to actually be transparent and accountable"?

Speaker, this has very little help for people who are currently waiting on OSAP. These 18 schedules—while this government would pretend that it is supposedly bringing accountability and transparency to the system, it is really doing very little.

I would like to suggest that this government already has the tools that it requires to monitor, to maintain and to protect the private career college sector. This government already has multiple tools.

If they indeed wanted a transparent, accountable and sustainable oversight program, they would, first, look to the surety, security and collateral provided by private career colleges in the Private Training and Educational Institution Bond, also known as the performance bond; it's money that private career colleges are required to pay. That surety, security and collateral could be then placed into the Ontario Trillium Trust.

If that money were placed in that, the proceeds of which would easily be able to afford five inspectors within the Ministry of Colleges, Universities and Research Excel-

lence—the private career colleges branch. If these were actually inspecting full-time, it wouldn't be too much of a burden. There would be about 90 private career colleges per inspector, and that would be something that they could perform as part of their yearly mandate.

In the routine course of an inspection, if one of these inspectors were to find any irregularity, private career colleges should have 15 days to identify that irregularity, 15 days to correct the issue and, if they had not done so after 30 days, then the institution would lose that accreditation and forfeit that security, that surety and collateral back into the Ontario Trillium Trust.

What is also missing from this legislation, in Bill 148, Speaker, is what happens in the case of students who are at one of those institutions that have seriously breached these conditions. Why is their education on pause? Why are they having to wait?

What should happen is that the private career college whose operations are suspended for serious breaches, investigation or have failed to maintain compliance should redirect all of those tuition funds to a receiving college of the students' choice where they can continue to pursue their studies. There should be no interruption for students who have done nothing wrong, and yet this government has placed a blanket over every student in private career colleges regardless of the institution where they are studying.

0930

This government, I fail to understand why they have eliminated the right to sue for students. They claim that the real bad actors here are these private career colleges—certain ones, of course—but then why are they removing the right and the ability of students to sue the Ontario government? Why would they have to take that away?

Why also does that right to sue include ministers, officials, for financial damages, for negligence, for other civil claims? The minister, in this House, claims that they're holding institutions accountable, but they themselves are not holding themselves accountable. They are putting up this shield.

If that weren't bad enough, if it weren't just them hiding from legal accountability themselves, they're also making it retroactive. What do they know? What has happened in the past that they need to also make this legal shield retroactive? These are questions that the official opposition would love to discover. We would love to file FOIs to really fully understand the reason and the nature and the thrust, the purpose, of this legislation and of this legal shield. However, we know that this government also got rid of the ability for media, the opposition and the public to file freedom-of-information requests against this government, its operations and its machinations. It's very clear that this government does not care about students; it cares more about protecting themselves in court about the mess that they made.

When we look at other parts of this bill, as I said in my introduction, there are so many pieces that are incredibly supportable—ones including the sharing of intimate partner images and that sort of thing—but it is bizarre to me that we see them lumped all together in the same piece of legislation.

Some of the things that we also have questions about include why it is that they are removing—in terms of long-term care. Long-term care is a very similar scenario to the one that we see within Bill 148. During the pandemic, we saw that some of the worst of the worst, some of the worst actors—if you read the army report, where people went in to rescue seniors who were screaming out for help, who were covered in bed sores, who were in soiled linens, who were dying of simple dehydration because they did not have the basics of human care, with trays of food sitting in corners gathering vermin. People who have paid into our system for their entire lives were treated in this way in a for-profit long-term-care system that cared more about profit than it did about the dignity and the respect that that senior deserved. Yet the government did the same thing at that time: They passed legislation indemnifying themselves from legal liability for all of the deaths and all of the suffering within long-term care, and they passed legislation to protect those for-profit actors.

If that weren't bad enough, there were no consequences for the people who had the worst track records in long-term care; in fact, they received a reward from the government. The government awarded some of the worst of the worst with yet more licences. They had proven that they could not do their job. They had proven that they were negligent, that they're irresponsible, that they didn't have enough people to care for all of the seniors within their facility and yet, somehow, that was a win for this government. They decided—how could you decide that someone who has done so poorly deserves better treatment?

When it comes to CAS in this bill, it's yet more of a mess. This government had conducted an audit, the results of which they kept secret for a year, and there have been so many reports of horrific conditions, as the official opposition critic has related: children living in sheds, in warehouse and office spaces, in motel rooms and Airbnbs; children dying more than one every three days. And yet this government wants to stop the tracking of children who are dying in care.

We have seen CAS operating on shoestring budgets—all while being insulted by this government, I might add—and 17% cuts. There have been 800 lost positions in the CAS between 2019 and 2025. These are people who are caring for some of our most vulnerable in society, and yet this government wants to cut back. In the CAS in London and Middlesex, there have been 47 staff who have lost their jobs.

There was a wonderful program that was offered at the CAS in my city of London; it was a child and youth medical clinic which actually paid for itself. Dr. McNeill was able to look after young people who had sometimes been born with addiction, sometimes born to parents who had other health struggles. In having that one point of contact, this allowed so many different, wonderful foster parents and caregivers to continue to look after some of the most medically fragile infants because when they had

questions, they were able to go right to Dr. McNeill. They were able to ask those questions.

That program actually saved money, because the cost of having those children in a NICU, for instance, was astronomical. But instead, they were able to be in a home-like setting. It paid for itself. And yet this government decided that because that didn't fit in their overall model across the province, it was something that they were desperate to cut.

Speaker, this government always claims that things should be run like a business and it touts the strength and the viability of the private sector. But I would say that this government does not behave at all in the way in which it preaches. It reeks of entitlement and arrogance that they are going about protecting themselves legally. I should think that in the private sector, if we had someone who had for years not done their job; for years had not heeded warnings from reputable, outside, arm's-length agencies such as the Auditor General, such as Career Colleges Ontario, going back as far as 2021—I would really think that in the private sector, any person of integrity, of moral fibre, of moral character would put their hands up and say, "I am not suited for the job." But yet this minister continues to move forward.

I should also think that the Premier, as the boss in Ontario, would realize that one of his employees, his minister, had failed so badly at this. To think that we have seen certain career colleges—it was covered just recently in the media, the number of students; I believe this was in the Canadian Press. They had a 6,000 per cent increase in the number of students who were receiving OSAP at the Canadian College of Business, Science and Technology. Over a three-year period, they went from 74 students to 4,500 students. How that did not set off alarm bells for this minister, for this ministry, is beyond me.

So, Speaker, why has the Premier of Ontario not had the backbone to fire his minister? Where is the integrity? Where is the fiduciary responsibility? Where is the sense of good business?

0940

When someone has failed this badly, surely there should be consequences. Surely there would be consequences. But yet, we see again and again from this government, instead of doing the right thing, instead of firing this minister, you see instead them deciding to put up a shield to protect themselves, to inoculate themselves. And if that weren't bad enough, it's not just a simple shield; it's a retroactive one, which is a tacit admission of something that's happened in the past—something that they don't want to be found.

We have a Conservative government that has blocked FOIs, that has made themselves legally immune to the students whom they have failed. And yet, somehow, people are still maintaining their jobs, claiming all of the problems are with private career colleges, not with the minister responsible for overseeing them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member from London North Centre for his comments, and I certainly always appreciate when he shares his remarks.

One item that I thought he might touch upon, which I've heard a lot from my constituents over the last little bit, which is included in the legislation, is the over-the-counter hearing aids. Apparently, AirPods have this feature, and from a regulatory perspective, it wasn't permissible to have them sold. Now this legislation is taking the action to enable the sale and use of Health Canada-approved, over-the-counter hearing aids for moderate hearing improvement.

I'm wondering if the member opposite could share whether he's heard that ask from his constituents and whether he supports that element of the bill.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank my friend from Windsor–Tecumseh for the question.

I think there's a great deal that is supportable within this bill, and I think the government needs to also expand their awareness of bone conduction hearing devices and the number of tests that are administered for young people in this province.

Unfortunately, hearing loss or hearing differences are not often observed or understood by parents. They will see a young person and they'll wonder why they're not communicating well, and a lot of the time that comes down to their inability to hear. I think what the government needs to do is look towards this sort of thing but not put it in omnibus legislation where they're giving themselves legal immunity, protecting themselves from the students whom they've failed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I want to thank my colleague on his speech.

I wanted to draw attention to the review of children's aid societies where it says, "Growth in reported serious occurrences were observed" along with "indications of the growth in the complexity of children's needs reported."

Serious occurrences we know are things like children dying in care, children suffering under the lack of supervision. They've even put a part of the bill about human trafficking in there, which really worries me. And I'm wondering, when we see this bill come forward with tinkering around the edges of board governance at CAS, do you see anything in this bill which will reduce the serious occurrences that children are experiencing or the complexity of care needs?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank my friend from Parkdale–High Park for an excellent question and for her advocacy in this as well.

The state is the parent of children in care, and yet we've seen an absolute failure as a parent.

This Conservative government cut the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth in 2018. They've also had a 20.3% funding cut to children's aid since 2018. It's absolutely unconscionable that there are children who are being housed in sheds, in office spaces, in motels. The risk of human trafficking there is absolutely astronomical.

The fact that this government refuses to track the number of children who die in its care has to show the

public that they are failing when it comes to looking after children. The fact that a child dies every three days and it could be possibly worse—but they've also blocked FOI so it can't be discovered, they won't report it and they won't let anyone discover it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. John Jordan: It always surprises me that a member in this House wouldn't recognize the huge improvements in long-term care that have been made by this government as a priority for this government, setting the highest standards in the country and implementing a robust inspection system to ensure compliance to those standards. This bill establishes a limitation period for commencing a prosecution under the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, which will support timely investigations and resolution. Would the member agree with such a change that's in this bill?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: You would think that this government would realize that its overreliance on the for-profit long-term-care model has been an abject failure in this province, yet I have to wonder how many people within the for-profit long-term-care sector are also donating to this government, and that is why they continue to reward them with yet more contracts. The NDP has been very clear that when you have care and profits fight with one another, care suffers and profit will always win.

We've also had the Healthcare Staffing Agencies Act, which would prevent reliance on for-profit nursing agencies. We've had the Time to Care Act. We've also had the Till Death Do Us Part Act to ensure that people who are in different long-term-care homes will be placed together in their golden years; this government has been avoiding passing that. What a shame.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank my colleague from London North Centre for his comments.

I wanted to ask: In February 2026, when this government pulled the rug out from under hundreds of thousands of Ontario students by gutting OSAP grants, were they forthcoming about the reason for the pressures in OSAP? Did they share with the public all of the fraudulent, suspicious activity that had been taking place among a handful of private career colleges since 2023? Did they talk at all about any efforts that had been made to try to rein in that fraud so that OSAP would continue to be available to students who are in financial need in this province and need support in order to go to post-secondary education?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank my colleague from London West for an excellent question.

This government—when they put this abrupt halt to OSAP funding for private career colleges, there was really no excuse. They did not provide any findings. The minister himself has admitted that they don't know how much has been scammed, which is bizarre to think that he is literally saying he does not know his file; he does not know his job.

Between 2023 and 2024, OSAP grants increased almost by a half a billion dollars, and 95% of that money went to private career colleges—but just to a few of them: $385 million went to a simple seven schools. That should have set off flags.

But what's also disturbing is that this government paused Better Jobs Ontario, a program whereby those on social assistance are able to get off social assistance and are able to find those job-ready skills, provide for their families and provide to our tax base. They also paused that. They did not tell those students why. They refused to communicate. What a failure of responsibility of this government to not admit what has gone wrong and what they're doing to fix it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to ask another question from the member from London North Centre. It has to do with the CAS file and what's here in the bill.

We know that navigating many of the government processes and agencies can be frustrating at the best of times. Families that navigate the child welfare system really need to know that their voices are heard and that they're meaningfully involved in decisions that affect their children. But those processes are so complicated, you can get overwhelmed.

In the legislation, it's proposed to increase the awareness of alternative dispute resolution. Any good legal counsel will say, "Avoid court. Let's find an agreement that works for both sides and helps to resolve matters with a more collaborative and constructive approach."

I'm hoping the member from London North Centre can advise of his view on ADR and whether this would provide new opportunities to have families' voices heard and disputes resolved outside of a lengthy and stressful court system.

0950

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank, again, my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh for this question.

I'm still stuck by the fact that the government would need to put this legislation within an omnibus bill. I'm also curious as to why they are consciously and intentionally manipulating the composition of boards. It makes no sense why we have this government that is legally inoculating themselves looking to wrest control of different organizations.

When it comes to the health promotion act, they are giving themselves the ability to appoint folks, public health officers. We have strong-mayor powers. There seems to be a lot of ways in which this government is looking for full control without any accountability, without any transparency and without any consequences for them and their actions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I move to further debate.

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: It's always a pleasure to rise in this House to speak on behalf of the residents of Don Valley North, and today, I'm honoured to speak on Bill 148, the Protect Ontario Families and Communities Act.

But, Speaker, it is not a pleasure to once again have to look at this omnibus bill. That's a system constantly being

used by this government: mishmashing all kinds of very important topics into a bill that's almost impossible to digest, not giving appropriate time for critical issues that deserve debate both in this chamber and at committees and time for our constituents back home to actually understand what this government is doing and why it is doing it.

Today, I want to focus in on specifically looking at the work of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. Considering that minister introduced this bill, it is shocking to see that only three of the schedules are actually related to his ministry, out of the total of 18 schedules located in this paperwork.

Why I want to focus specifically on this ministry is because I have a firm belief that the role of government is to support those who cannot support themselves. This is the role of every single person in this House and a core function of our government. We're not sent here to advocate for those who are loudest. We're not sent here to advocate for the richest. We're not sent here to advocate for those who knock on our door more because they have more access. We're sent here to be a voice for those who need it—for children, for people living with disabilities and for seniors.

I'm, again, focusing in on the ministry. Just the other day, on November 16, the government released its long-awaited KPMG review of Ontario's children's aid societies.

I want to take the House back a little bit. Let's go back to October 2024 and the reason why this review was initiated in the first place. It starts with this Premier's accusation of wasteful spending, expensive offices, inflated executive compensation and even the so-called "Taj Mahal" offices.

Based upon these accusations, the government ordered its friends at KPMG to begin an audit. I don't think anyone in this House would have any objections against wasteful spending. But what did this audit actually find? That's the real question. It found that administrative expenses were actually stable, occupancy costs were a small and declining share of spending and executive compensation increases were actually below inflation.

So where were the major financial pressures? Why were the children's aid societies not able to deliver for the people that need it the most, the most vulnerable, children who are in care of this province, wards of the state?

Well, the increasing costs come from caring for children with complex developmental, behavioural and mental health needs, not executive compensation, not administrative costs. It's complex care—a failure of this government to create a system that actually supports children when they need it. That's where the money is going, Speaker: a failed system—a system that this government has refused to invest in.

So it's very easy for a politician to stand here and create a financial bogeyman, to say that it's us versus them: "It's because they spend wrong. They take the money. They don't know how to use it. They're doing wrong, not us." It's easy for a government to place blame on other people and create false outrage amongst our voters. What's harder is actually fixing a system that is so broken that it cannot support those who need it the most, and that is what's happening in Ontario right now, Speaker.

And still, we're seeing children who, again, are in the care of this provincial government being put into hotels, motels and offices. Let that sink in, Speaker: vulnerable children being put into motels, hotels and offices because of this broken system.

I want to take the House back a little further as well, once again, on a little journey into the past. Recently at committee, we had the minister there, at estimates, and I asked the government, "Can you tell me how many vulnerable children are being placed in these unlicensed locations?" And Speaker, do you have an idea of what the response was? I don't think I've heard a more appalling response from this government since. The response was, "This is not our responsibility"—vulnerable children, not our responsibility.

So Speaker, I looked further into the bill, and we see that schedule 2 introduces changes to the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, including alternative dispute resolution, foreign adoption recognition and information sharing. And look, there are reasonable changes in this bill that relate to these issues. There is no doubt. But none of them directly address the shortage of specialized residential placements. None of it does the hard work of actually looking at a systemic problem that is facing this entire system and letting an entire generation of children down. Speaker, they're tinkering around the edges.

I would actually like to ask the minister, what is the plan to reduce reliance on unsuitable, unlicensed emergency accommodations and to ensure that our children are receiving appropriate care?

Speaker, a constant and recurring theme that we've had to deal with in this House is the autism wait-list, because this is a reality that families across this entire province are having to deal with every single day. In fact, of the 92,000 children registered, 71,000 continue to wait for core clinical services. That's simply unacceptable.

But you see, Speaker, one of the important findings from the KPMG audit is that children's aid societies are increasingly becoming providers of last resort. So that means it's not families who do not want to care for their children; it's families who have reached a breaking point where they can no longer care for their children. So we're having families reach a crisis point, and now the child welfare system is becoming the only place left that they can turn. This shouldn't be happening in Ontario. We should be supporting those who need our support. We should be supporting families in these situations, not making them give up their children in a desperate act, which is happening right now.

The real question here is, why aren't we providing appropriate services for families before they reach this point?

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Another important part that is not being addressed by this bill is looking at people with developmental disabilities, a large challenge that I've been dealing with with my

own constituents. We've had many cases where parents of children with development disabilities have come to us. As their children get older, the parents get older. Now, reaching into the retirement age, they worry, "What will happen to my children when I'm gone? Who will care for my children when I'm gone?"

But why are they being forced to ask themselves these questions? It's because they are the sole caregivers for children with complex needs. In this one case, it was a case where the where the child needed three-to-one, if not four-to-one, care. What is he receiving? One-to-one. So who compensates? His mother, his father, his sister.

Where is the provincial government in this? Where is anyone standing up to actually say they care and they will make a change? Nowhere, Speaker.

I will leave it at that for now. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I thank my colleague for his speech. I wanted to touch base on the intimate partner violence piece, the deepfakes.

One of the questions that I have is really about whether this bill goes far enough. We have a 900-page report from this government. We know that it is full of links that actually don't go anywhere, and I'm wondering how trustworthy a report like that is. And that report has led to a few pieces in this bill, but really not the kind of robust support that we know that women and individuals fleeing violence need.

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: I want to thank my honourable colleague for that question.

Speaker, I had a meeting yesterday with the Salvation Army in my office, and we had a long discussion about the faults of the government, but also what the government does do right sometimes. And I started off by saying that, look, I fundamentally believe that every single person in this House comes here because they actually want to make a change. They want to help people. The problem is, we often diverge in how we do that.

When it comes to the issue that you're addressing right here, we do not address this through an omnibus legislation of 18 schedules. If this government was actually serious about taking this problem and actually doing something about it, about protecting victims, they wouldn't be ramming this bill through the Legislature in an omnibus bill, almost like it's being hidden.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Toronto–St. Paul's.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thank you to my colleague for his remarks today on Bill 148 and the situation with the children's aid society. It's astonishing to hear, when asked at estimates, what you heard from this minister about how it's not their problem or it's not their responsibility.

In case you haven't heard about it: An Ontario teen lived in a shed while under the watch of the children's aid society. Everybody knew, but nobody cared. So I want to ask the member: What has gone so wrong with this ministry that we have a child living in a shed under the watchful eye of the CAS?

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: Thank you to my honourable colleague for that question.

Look, the story that she highlighted, the case, is heartbreaking. And unfortunately, in Ontario, this case is not alone. We all remember Jade, who died in care while being put in a motel. We have now a case of someone being forced to live in a shed.

Look, as I said earlier, I believe the minister wants to do good. I know the minister; he's a good man.

It's the government that refuses to fix a system that's so flawed, so broken, unwilling to invest, that we in Ontario have children sleeping in a shed. Let that sink in, Speaker: a child sleeping in a shed in Ontario tonight.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Carleton.

MPP George Darouze: We talk about social workers and social services workers—are often at their most vulnerable. They deserve to know that the professionals entrusted with their care will be held to the highest standard.

Our government is proposing amendments to the Social Work and Social Service Work Act to require mandatory reprimands, suspensions or revocations of registration when findings of sexual abuse are made. Can the member explain why they would oppose stronger accountability measures and fail to stand with victims who deserve protection, justice and confidence in the professionals entrusted with their care?

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: Speaker, I categorically reject what my honourable colleague just said. Accusing us and me of failing to stand with social workers is the most absurd thing I've heard this morning. I spent the last 10 minutes explaining why our system is broken and not protecting the most vulnerable in society. Of course I stand with social workers. Of course I want to see our province do better. Of course there's good elements in this bill.

But if we truly cared about protecting people, if we truly cared about social workers, again, we would not be hiding these pieces inside an omnibus bill of 18 schedules that range from dentures to chiropractic care. It's ridiculous, Speaker, and I reject this question totally.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I'll move to further debate.

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: It's always a privilege to rise to speak to government legislation on behalf of the people of Barrie–Innisfil. I just want to thank the residents of Barrie–Innisfil for their trust in me and electing me as their representative here locally.

When I read Bill 148, the Protect Ontario Families and Communities Act, what stood out to me is how much it does reflect communities like the one I am so privileged to represent, Barrie–Innisfil. It really shows to me how our government is listening and how our Minister of Children, Community and Social Services hears things from our communities when he criss-crosses this province.

I had the honour of hosting him in my riding of Barrie when we went to a local children's provider who was celebrating an anniversary. I brought my daughter, Anastasia, with us, and it was incredible how many people

there were able to get services and supports via this government but also found that they were heard. The government is really meeting them where they're at and responding in real time, whether it's through legislation like the one before us, regulation or budget measures increasing those necessary supports.

That's the cornerstone in everything the government does. People of Ontario deserve a government that comes to them, and that's the spirit of Bill 148. The Protect Ontario Families and Communities Act honours that spirit. To protect the people of Ontario, we need to know the people of Ontario, and this certainly speaks to the fact that we know the people of Ontario.

At its heart, the legislation is about protecting the people and communities that make Ontario such a special place to call home. It's also about protecting children, who deserve to grow up in a safe and supportive environment. As a mom of two, I know how important it is for parents to have that reassurance that their government is taking care of their most vulnerable in their community.

It's also about supporting those families who are navigating difficult circumstances and need access to services and supports. It's about protecting survivors of intimate partner violence and intimate image abuse, and it's about ensuring that seniors receive the dignity and quality of care they deserve. It's also about strengthening the accountability and sustainability of public service that Ontarians depend on every day.

I have the privilege of representing Barrie–Innisfil, a community I'm proud to call home, a place where I raise my own family and where I grew up with my grandparents. When I came to Canada with my grandparents at the very young age of four, they instilled the values that Ontario and Canada represent and the values that this bill represents. We work hard. We play by the rules. But if you break the rules, we should have the full force of the law that is there at every level of government.

So the spirit of this legislation honours that trust between people and their government to know that there are punitive measures there for people who abuse the system, our children and women. We are updating it to the 21st century.

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But I have seen first-hand how our communities have grown and they have changed and how important it is that services that families rely on keep pace with that growth. Many people choose to call Ontario home. They come for that opportunity, they're rewarded for their ambition and they want to raise their families here. Whether it's a parent looking for supports for their children or survivors seeking a place to turn or a senior who needs additional care, these issues are very real. That is why this legislation matters so much.

The Protect Ontario Families and Communities Act brings forward a series of measures to strengthen Ontario's child welfare system, improve protections for victims and enhance accountability across the social services sector. It reflects the need for government to continually examine how we make improvements that will make a meaningful difference in the people's lives.

We will continue to listen to the people delivering services on the front lines and respond to the challenges families face and that communities face. This is something that our minister of community and social services has always done first-hand. He reaches out to the communities. He reaches out to the service providers, to the front-line workers. We constantly adapt and mould to the changes of today so that we have a system that responds in real time. We ensure that there's a system in Ontario that has sustainability, accountability and is equipped to deliver the services that people need.

Speaker, every child deserves to be safe. They deserve stability, dignity and the opportunity to reach their full potential. And when children and families need support, we need to be ready with a system that is responsive, accountable and equipped to deliver. Children's aid societies play an essential role in that in Ontario. They work with children, youth, families during some of the most challenging moments of their lives, supporting families through crises and working to ensure children are protected. It is important that these organizations have the resources, governance and expertise necessary to support those needs.

Our government recognizes the importance of the work being done, and this year our government invested over $2 billion in child welfare, supporting 50 children's aid societies across Ontario. Since 2024, we've been able to help child welfare organizations manage their rising operating costs, which includes an additional $41.7 million in ongoing supports. This has been a lifeline and game-changer for many residents in Barrie–Innisfil: the service providers, the children's aid societies and everyone who is part of those communities that need it most.

That's because this is a government that recognizes that organizations delivering these services must have strong governance and sound financial management for us to continue to do the investments that are needed most. Ontario has seen a reduction of over 20% in the number of children in care. Our government is continuing to increase provincial funding for child welfare because we understand the importance of supporting vulnerable children and the organizations that serve them. For families across Ontario, we're ensuring that communities can turn to these organizations with confidence and that the needs of families and children at the centre of the system are being met.

Speaker, another important part of strengthening child welfare is ensuring families understand the supports and options available to them. Families are the foundation of our communities. In Barrie and in Innisfil, we see families in every stage of life, from young parents raising their children to grandparents helping the next generation. We want families to have access to tools and services they need when challenges arise. And as Minister Parsa mentioned, alternative dispute resolution is a great resource that can help bring together children's families, extended family and their community to support collaborative deci-

sion-making in child protective disputes. This approach stretches—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I'm sorry to interrupt.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): It is now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LASALLE POLICE SERVICE

Mr. Anthony Leardi: The town of LaSalle has a fantastic municipal police force. It is led by Chief Michael Pearce, and the town of LaSalle routinely makes the top of the list for one of the safest communities to live in all of the province of Ontario.

The town of LaSalle has, in the past, received support from this government in the form of a ROPE grant. That is, of course, the repeat offender and parole enforcement grant.

Now the town of LaSalle's municipal police force will receive another grant from this government, this time from the Proceeds of Crime Front-Line Policing Grant. This money comes from the proceeds of crime, meaning when a criminal is prosecuted and convicted, the government seizes that property away from that criminal and puts it into this fund. The town of LaSalle will be receiving $270,000, proving once again that crime does not pay.

Speaker, unlike the NDP, who want to defund the police, our government is continuing to support our police forces so towns like LaSalle can continue to benefit from their municipal police force and remain safe communities to live in the province of Ontario.

ARTHUR DUBOSQ

M. Guy Bourgouin: Aujourd'hui, j'ai l'honneur de souligner un jeune étudiant extraordinaire de Mushkegowuk–James Bay. Arthur Dubosq est le premier étudiant de mon comté à être sélectionné au programme de pages, et j'aimerais prendre ce moment pour le féliciter pour cette belle réussite. Le programme de pages législatives est une belle opportunité de découverte et de vivre la démocratie en action, ainsi que de comprendre le déroulement législatif ici à l'Assemblée. Être sélectionné à ce programme est un immense honneur et y participer fait preuve d'engagement, de dévouement et d'un vouloir d'apprendre et de s'épanouir.

I am very excited to share that Mushkegowuk–James Bay has its very first legislative page with us this week. Arthur Dubosq is a brilliant young francophone student from Kapuskasing. We are very proud of having him here with us, representing the people of northern Ontario.

I would also like to thank his family, especially his mother, Samantha, who accompanied him here. For a family from northern Ontario, an opportunity like this requires considerable planning, travel and sacrifice, both personally and professionally. Your dedication and the effort made to ensure Arthur could enjoy this wonderful experience are truly appreciated.

I also would like to take this moment to recognize that the opportunity would not have been possible without the leadership of Madam Speaker and the pilot project you introduced to help eliminate the barriers faced by families travelling far to participate.

Thank you, Arthur, and enjoy—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Members' statements?

SMALL BUSINESS

MPP Stephanie Smyth: One of the things I love most about representing Toronto–St. Paul's is getting to know many of the small business owners who make our neighbourhoods what they are. Whether it's grabbing a coffee at a local café, stopping into a family-owned shop along St. Clair West or sitting down with one of the many independent restaurants in our riding, these businesses are part of our everyday lives. Behind every one of those businesses is a person, a family and, often, years of hard work and sacrifice.

But I know that keeping small businesses running comes with real challenges. The cost of rent, cost of supplies, utilities, employee wages can all make it increasingly difficult for local businesses to stay afloat, let alone grow.

Recently, I met with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, who shared a petition signed by more than 11,000 small business owners across Ontario, including owners right here in Toronto–St. Paul's. These business owners are asking to be heard. They want the ability to invest in their employees, to grow their businesses, to continue contributing to the communities that they call home.

When our local businesses succeed, our neighbourhoods benefit. They create jobs. They bring people to the area. They give our communities life and character. So I want to take a moment to thank all the small business owners across Toronto–St. Paul's. Thank you for taking the chance, for showing up every day, and making our community—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Members' statements?

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: Today, I rise to share a big milestone in my life. This September, I celebrated 35 years as a volunteer firefighter with Chatham-Kent Station 8 in Thamesville. Looking back, it's been one of the greatest journeys of my life.

1020

For three and a half decades, I've experienced the pride of protecting my community while serving alongside an incredible group of people. When you spend that many

years at a fire hall, the crew becomes much more than co-workers; they become family.

Every firefighter knows what it means to leave a warm dinner table or wake up in the middle of the night when the pager goes off. Through every tough call and long night, it's the firefighter family that has your back.

At the same time, I want to thank my immediate family. I truly could not have done this for 35 years without you. I want to thank the brave men and women who serve alongside at home and every firefighter across Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. I am proud of the work that we do, and I look forward to the years to come.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yesterday, Workers' Action Centre presented at the province's pre-budget consultations and shared a really worrying example of wage theft at a Toronto nail salon. Ten workers at Nail Fix in the 6ix are owed approximately $70,000 in unpaid wages. Can you imagine being owed that much money in the middle of an affordability crisis?

Workers say they sometimes received only 20% to 50% of what they earned, with some workers being required to pay approximately $1,200 for training certificates despite having previous experience.

So you know what they did? They went to the Minister of Labour for help, and the Minister of Labour ruled in their favour and ordered the employer to pay approximately $70,000 in unpaid wages to 10 workers.

Well, guess what? Do you think they've got their money yet? No, they haven't got their money yet. So they contacted the Ministry of Finance to talk about collection, and the Ministry of Finance has not followed up, and they are still waiting to be paid.

This issue of wage theft is not just an issue that affects these nail workers in Nail Fix in the 6ix. It is rife, and the reason why it is rife is because there is not enough enforcement, there are not enough proactive investigations, and there are not enough prosecutions for employers that break the rules. This—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Thank you.

TOWN OF PETROLIA

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm pleased to share more great news for Sarnia–Lambton. Recently, I had the opportunity to join the mayor of Petrolia, my hometown, to announce exciting news for the community.

Thanks to the town of Petrolia's bold decision to completely eliminate development charges on all new housing types, the Ontario government, in partnership with the government of Canada, is investing up to $2.3 million in the town through the Development Charge Reduction Program.

For local homebuyers, the impact is substantial. Eliminating these charges reduces construction costs by up to $11,695 per home. When combined with the full HST relief on eligible new homes, families in Petrolia could save up to $141,695, making home ownership far more attainable for young professionals, growing families and seniors.

Beyond direct savings, this investment by our government is expected to unlock 781 homes, creating greater housing choice and affordability for both buyers and renters. This $2.3-million investment will also fund vital community infrastructure to support this growth, planned upgrades, including a new fire pumper and rescue trucks, enhanced equipment and vehicles for public works and significant—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Thank you.

WELLAND FOOD DRIVE

Mr. Jeff Burch: Earlier this month, Welland's 34th annual food drive took place at Club Richelieu, collecting donations for Open Arms Mission, the Hope Centre and the Salvation Army.

More than 500 volunteers helped sort and pack food, including 100 volunteer drivers who travelled more than 90 routes on Saturday morning, picking up non-perishable food items left on doorsteps. The food drive raised over $43,000 and thousands of pounds of food that is still being weighed. With more than one in 10 Welland residents regularly relying on food banks, the need has never been greater.

In an interview with the Welland Tribune, Rosh Gill, associate director of Open Arms Mission, said they are seeing 20% to 30% more people accessing their food bank.

Jennifer Sinclair, community engagement coordinator at the Hope Centre, also noted that food collected in previous years would have lasted until the spring, but now only lasts until the end of the holiday season.

I recently met with David Vandersteen, manager of Feed Niagara, who told me that Niagara's food banks support nearly 40,000 people across the region.

I want to thank all these incredible organizations, staff and volunteers for their commitment to the community and for working so hard to address growing food security issues in Niagara.

WINDSOR INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Over the last 11 days, downtown Windsor became one of Canada's great destinations for film. The 22nd Windsor International Film Festival presented more than 300 screenings and 232 feature films from 55 countries. A record audience of more than 38,000 gathered not only to watch exceptional films, but to reflect, connect and take part in the conversations that great storytelling inspires.

Canadian stories took centre stage. Sean Menard's Run Terry Run, a moving documentary about Terry Fox and the Marathon of Hope, received the LiUNA People's Choice Award. Matthew Rankin's Ladies and Gentlemen, Brian Mulroney won the $25,000 WIFF prize in Canadian Film.

Our government is proud to support WIFF's continued success with $303,800 through six provincial programs. This investment is expanding festival programming, improving accessibility, supporting francophone cinema and creating professional development opportunities for filmmakers.

Congratulations to executive director and chief programmer Vincent Georgie, and to WIFF board, staff, volunteers, sponsors, filmmakers and, truly, the loyal audiences who support the festival each and every year.

Speaker, the credits may have rolled on this year's festival, but WIFF's impact continues. It brings the world to Windsor, showcases Canadian creativity, and gives our entire province another reason to celebrate.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: It's hard to believe, but Christmas is just around the corner. Families are expected to spend an average of about $900 on gifts this year. That's slightly less than last year's $943, but collectively, it represents a $13-billion injection into our Canadian economy.

A few weeks ago, we heard the finance minister talk about slow economic growth in this province, so I want to encourage Ontarians to spend their hard-earned dollars close to home and to shop local. Our small businesses, particularly in rural communities, are the backbone of our local economies. They sponsor our sports teams, support our community events and are often the first to reach into their pockets when someone needs a helping hand.

But our small businesses are struggling. I speak with them all the time, and some are telling me they are facing difficult decisions about their future.

That should be a wake-up call for this government. It's time to make some tough decisions of its own. We have an entire Ministry of Red Tape Reduction here at Queen's Park; let's put it to work. Small business owners should be spending their time serving customers and growing their businesses, not navigating mountains of paperwork and compliance requirements. Just recently, we added another expense—another headache—for small businesses simply trying to manage their garbage.

So while I encourage everyone to put their money where their community is this Christmas, I also have a message for this government: Don't just encourage people to shop local; make it easier for our local businesses to survive and thrive. That's a Christmas gift our small business owners can get behind.

JOHN ANDREW HOPE

Mr. John Jordan: Speaker, the Provincial Plaque Program began in 1955 and is one of the province's oldest heritage programs. Almost 1,300 of these familiar blue-and-gold plaques have been unveiled across the province. The program has commemorated significant people, places and events that have shaped Ontario's history.

One of those significant people was Perth's John Andrew Hope. He served in the First World War and was wounded twice during his service. Upon his return to Perth in 1919, Hope became president of the Great War Veterans' Association and wanted to honour soldiers who had made the supreme sacrifice. He brought community groups together to fund and equip a 20-bed memorial hospital in Victoria Hall. On March 8, 1923, as its first president, Hope opened the door to Perth's new hospital. The Great War Memorial Hospital provided much-needed medical care to the community while also serving as a lasting memorial to the men and women in the region who have served.

Hope's compassion helped turn remembrance into a lasting community institution, now part of the Perth and Smiths Falls District Hospital.

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On September 10, I was honoured to attend the unveiling of this special plaque along with John Hope's grandson David Poynton. Mr. Hope's legacy is now enshrined on the grounds of the hospital in Perth, and the plaque will ensure that future generations will remember his remarkable contributions to the town, Ontario and Canada.

HON. RAYMOND SUNG JOON CHO

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Members, if I could have your attention, please.

Today, we recognize a truly remarkable milestone. Ontario's oldest sitting MPP and cabinet minister, Raymond Sung Joon Cho, the member for Scarborough North, celebrates his 90th birthday.

Minister Cho's story is one of perseverance, determination and service. Raised by a single mother as one of eight children, Minister Cho survived the hardships of the Second World War and lived through the Korean War. In 1967, he immigrated to Canada in search of opportunity and a better life. Like so many newcomers, he came from humble beginnings. Minister Cho worked as a dishwasher, a worm picker, a janitor and miner before building a career as a social worker.

For more than 35 years, Minister Cho has dedicated himself to serving others. In 1991, he became Toronto's first Korean-born city councillor and, 25 years later, he was elected Ontario's first Korean-born cabinet minister. Since 2018, he has served as Ontario's first and longest-serving Minister for Seniors and Accessibility. His advocacy on behalf of seniors and people with disabilities has helped improve the lives of countless Ontarians.

Beyond his many accomplishments, Minister Cho is a devoted husband, father and grandfather. He and his wife, Soon Ok, recently celebrated 60 years of marriage. Together, they raised three children and are the proud grandparents of seven grandchildren who, I am told, occasionally challenge him on the pickleball court.

Minister, reaching this milestone while continuing to serve with such energy, optimism and dedication is an extraordinary achievement. Your 90th birthday is a testa-

ment to a lifetime of leadership, resilience and commitment to others.

On behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, I extend my heartfelt congratulations on this special occasion and wish you your continued good health, happiness and many more years of service. Happy birthday.

Singing of Happy Birthday.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I'd now like to draw your attention to the Speaker's gallery, where we have Paul Miller, the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek in the 39th, 40th, 41st and 42nd Parliaments.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I am very happy to introduce important people from my riding of Scarborough and the University of Toronto Press. The first, the Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto: Angela Chan, president, and Sharifa Khan, chair; Muslim Welfare Canada: Shahid Khan, president, and Iqbal Ali, chairman; Islamic Foundation of Toronto: Imam Badat; Yee Hong foundation: Stephen Siu, president, and everybody knows Dr. Joseph Wong of Yee Hong geriatric centre and founder of ALPHA Education; University of Toronto Press: Jennifer DiDomenico-Wong and Vesna Micic Pavicevic. From Sri Lakshmi Narayan Hindu temple: Naval Grotra, former president of the Hindu Cultural Society. And finally, my lovely wife, Soon Ok Cho, and my grandson Sebastian Raymond Cho.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Members, once again, if I could ask you to draw your attention to the Speaker's gallery, we have the member for Wellington in the 35th and 36th Parliaments; the member for Waterloo–Wellington in the 37th and 38th Parliaments; the member for Wellington–Halton Hills in the 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd Parliaments; and the Speaker for the 42nd and 43rd—and we will be unveiling his portrait later today: the Honourable Ted Arnott, and, of course, his beautiful wife, Lisa.

Hon. Graydon Smith: I want to welcome William Greenberg, Julianne Greenberg and Robbie Greenberg, constituents from my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka.

It's my pleasure to also welcome a former MPP and minister and former member of federal Parliament, Tony Clement, to the chamber today. I'm not sure where Tony is, but he's here somewhere. Welcome.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to introduce Fangmin Wang and Maryse Lemoine, parents of page Léa Lemoine-Wang. Welcome to the House.

Hon. Kevin Holland: Joining us from the Thunder Bay Police Association are Shawn Harrison, Brad Gottfred and Lawrence Olynick. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP George Darouze: I'm pleased to welcome a true leader in health care from Ottawa, supporting residents from Carleton and residents from all across Ontario: Cameron Love, president and CEO of the Ottawa Hospital. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I'm so happy to welcome Hasan Naqvi, an amazing businessman and entrepreneur for over 35 years in information and data technology, from my riding of Markham–Thornhill. He's joined by his wife, Zenab Naqvi, an accomplished artist with works featured across the city. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I have three groups to introduce.

I'd like to introduce the Police Association of Ontario—London Police Association—members Paulo Domingues, Gareth Harris, Gary Bezaire, Ozzie Nethersole and Kyle Tedball.

Also, with OREA, we have LSTAR, including Raeanne Muir and Chad Lovell.

And with the United Food and Commercial Workers, we have Pablo Godoy, Adrian Conlon, Sheryl Raymond and James Antony Pathmarajah.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Jamie West: Visitors from the Sudbury Police Association are here: Matt, Mauro, Jacques and Kevin. Welcome to your House.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: I have some people from the riding of Oakville—Ahmed Helmi from the Cornerstone real estate association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Rob Flack: Joining us today are members from the Ontario Real Estate Association: the president, Kim Fairley, the president-elect, Meredith Kennedy, the provincial director, Don McColl, and the director at large, Stan Reljic. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: I'd like to welcome Joseph Wong and Stephen Siu from Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I have a number of folks from Guelph who are here today, including Carolyn Stephenson and her 10-year-old grandson Isaiah Stephenson, who are here to have lunch with her MPP.

Also here from Guelph: Eric Philip from Thresholds Homes and Kristen Cairney from Wyndham House, who were in the media studio earlier today.

I would also like to welcome Guelph Police Association members Matt Jotham, Jim Turow and Brendan Campbell. Thank you for your service.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Speaker, I'd like to welcome Andrea Fedy, a Waterloo constituent. She is here today with Cornerstone Association of Realtors. Welcome to your House.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Please let me welcome, Speaker, the leadership from the Police Association of Ontario: its president, Mark Baxter; its chairman, Tim Reparon; and those in the gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Monica Ciriello: Madam Speaker, it's my pleasure to welcome members of my incredible police association of Hamilton, Hamilton Police Association members Wes, Hope, Chris and Jaimi. Welcome to Queen's Park.

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M^me^ France Gélinas: I'd like to welcome members from the Airport Management Council of Ontario, includ-

ing Terry Bos, Giovanna Verrilli, Luke Van Der Mark and Chris Drumm. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Paul Vickers: I'd like to introduce this person that sat on Grey Highlands council for two terms. He's now the treasurer for Chatsworth. He sits on the board of directors of Good Roads and he's the second vice-president. His name is Aakash Desai, but everybody knows him in Grey county as Aakash.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park members from the Hamilton Police Association: Jaimi Bannon, Wes Wilson, Chris Duvall and Hope Paiva. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. David Piccini: I'm pleased to welcome representatives from the Ontario Real Estate Association to Queen's Park. Joining us in the gallery are Kirby Eady, Wendy Giroux, Christine Riley, Lisa Comerford and Travis Hoover from our community.

As well, I'd like to welcome members of the Cobourg Police Association, Rich Ferguson and Kyle Tobin. I appreciate the work they do every day.

MPP Jamie West: I forgot to mention that members of UFCW are here: Craig McDowell as well as Chris Fuller, Debora De Angelis, Doug Blaine and my good friend Richard Eberhardt, in the gallery spying on his daughter, who is a page.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: A warm welcome to Abe Taqtaq of the Windsor-Detroit tunnel duty free shop, Kent Rice from the Windsor Police Association and the Windsor-Essex County Association of Realtors. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I'm pleased to welcome Dona Eull-Schultz and her grandson Lucas Schultz Vesely to Queen's Park today. We're delighted to have you here.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Unfortunately, we are out of time. There is time, however, at 1 o'clock if you would like to come back to the chamber and introduce your guests at that time.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): At 3 o'clock, but you can come back at 1 o'clock if you wish as well and sit there and introduce anybody you want. I'll make sure that the chamber is open for you.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: This is a question for the Premier. Last week, S&P Global revised the province's outlook to negative. Why? Because of our rising debts and our rising deficits under this government's watch. This government promised us fiscal responsibility, but all they could deliver was debts, deficits and scandals.

The Premier is gambling with Ontario's future. His out-of-control spending is putting Ontario's credit rating now at risk, while taxpayers are already paying billions to service our half-a-trillion-dollar debt.

What is the Premier's plan to stop wasting taxpayer dollars and start delivering for the people of Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: You know, Madam Speaker, it has been clear since day one: We got the credit rating upgrade to AA. We're going to fight to keep the credit rating at AA. We're the strongest province, the lowest bar in costs. In fact, yesterday, the member opposite would know that we went to the market for US$3 billion at better spread than we've ever gotten.

International investors love Ontario. US investors love Ontario. And do you know who else loves Ontario? Ontarians love Ontario's credit rating and bond access. This is keeping interest rates low.

But you know what else? We're not going to stop the fight to protect our workers, be they in Hamilton, be they in Sault Ste. Marie, be they in Windsor, Ontario. That's what the people of Ontario—we're going to fight for every worker and for every business in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, let's take a look at how things are going, shall we, Speaker? Ontario has the highest deficit in our history. We are barrelling towards half-a-trillion—yes, a trillion—dollar debt, and we have the highest provincial debt in the history of this country.

And what's worse is that things are not getting any better for regular people in the province of Ontario. Things are harder. I mean, the Minister of Finance may think it's hard to do his job, but let me tell you, it's pretty hard trying to feed a family on the salary of an ECE these days.

So I would like this government to answer my question, please. Will the Premier admit that his government is losing control of our province's finances?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Let me understand this, Madam Speaker. Our debt as a percentage of the economy has gone down, and do you want to know why? The economy has grown from $800 billion when we took it over to $1.3 trillion. That's part of being a fiscally prudent manager.

But do you know what the member opposite would have us do? Their plan would be to raise taxes and cut health care spending. Well, we're not going to do that. We're going to continue to focus on investing in the people of Ontario, investing in the workers of Ontario, investing in the businesses of Ontario, because a strong economy means a strong credit rating means a strong Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Keep up, Minister, because I don't hear a plan there at all. Bills are up for regular people. Wait times are up for people. The cost to taxpayers actually keeps growing.

Let's take a look at what this Premier billed to the taxpayers of Ontario, shall we? More than $100,000 for a private jet flight to Texas; $31 million to run an ad about how he is making life more affordable—that's rich; $4,000

per household to pay interest on our province's debt. This is the so-called fiscal responsibility and fiscal prudence that this Premier has been pounding his chest about.

I'd like to know: Why is the Premier costing Ontarians billions while delivering nothing to make their lives better?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Do you know what this Premier is doing? He's criss-crossing this country, criss-crossing everywhere to promote Ontario. You know, why don't you start promoting Ontario instead of tearing Ontario down?

In fact, I was in Montreal yesterday—over 1,000 people to hear from our Premier, talk about how we can build on our $1.3-trillion economy with their almost $700-billion economy, a $2-trillion economy. Let's work together. Let's create those jobs, the environment for good, creative jobs in Ontario. Let's focus on the things we can do in Canada. Let's cut that red tape together. Support Bill 143. Support faster permitting. Support nuclear in the energy bill. Support our education minister in having better outcomes for students. Support the Ring of Fire, building the road to the Ring of Fire and bringing prosperity to the north. You have the opportunity to vote for Bill 143. Please do so.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm going to go back to the Premier for this question. The Premier promised the people of Ontario that he was going to fight for the little guy. I remember that. But he's not in it for the little guy. He's in it for the big spenders. In 2023, Peter Tanenbaum, a developer who won big during the whole greenbelt carve-up, donated $18,000 to the PC Party; $18,000 is more than five times what the legal donation was in 2023. And here's what happens next: Guess what? His land was removed from the greenbelt. Coincidence? I think not. Speaker, we all know what this looks like. It looks like pay-to-play.

So I'd like to ask the Premier: Is the only way to get on his agenda through donations to his party?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Rob Flack: While the Leader of the Opposition wants to spend time in the past, we are focused on the future. Speaker, we followed the rules. We continue to follow the rules. In fact, we've strengthened the rules, and we're creating the conditions to build more homes faster.

Let's talk about results, Speaker. Let's talk about results: $4.4 billion has been protected in the GDP, $1 billion of income tax protected. Why? Because we're creating conditions to build more homes faster, and that's exactly what's happening. Some 8,000 incremental new sales in the last six months—8,000 new sales: It's working, Speaker. We've introduced the Development Charge Reduction Program that's going to enhance what we're going to accomplish, and, at the end of the day, we're seeing the results. Speaker, we're up 61% in sales, and guess what? Sales lead to starts, and starts are going to drive this economy. We're going to stick to the plan. Why? Because this plan is working.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: A plan to come up with a plan to come up with another plan, and we have the lowest housing starts in the country, so it's not working, sorry.

And look, if it happens one time, Speaker, maybe you can call it a coincidence, but if it happens over and over and over again, it is a pattern. Members of this government have raked in hundreds of thousands of dollars from career college executives, including the college that is under OPP investigation for defrauding OSAP. But instead of closing those loopholes, the minister and his government left the door wide open for fraud. You donate, you get on this government's agenda.

So will the Premier admit that the only way to get on his government's agenda is through political donations?

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I appreciate the opportunity to speak about the time frames that got us to the point that we froze OSAP at private career colleges. That's why we're bringing forward legislation. We're strengthening accountability to ensure anyone that intends to abuse our OSAP system for personal gain is held to the full extent of the law.

With this legislation that I know the member opposite will support, our government would better protect OSAP from misuse, enforce stronger penalties against wrongdoers and stop bad actors in their tracks. We'll pursue all avenues to return fraudulently used funds to the taxpayer.

These are very serious allegations, and we take every single tip seriously. We've done over 3,200 OSAP investigations since 2020, and we will not stop until all dollars are used for their intended uses.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, Speaker, no wonder regular people in this province can't get a break on the cost of their groceries or their bills. Because if you want something from this government, you better pony up.

Speaking of ponies, the member for Willowdale, the former Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, the same guy who misspent $16,000 of taxpayer money on luxury hotel rooms—and, by the way, he got a promotion for that—met at a Moxies with key players in Ontario's horse racing industry, and they made a deal, Speaker. It was like, "Come to my fundraiser, and when we're re-elected, I'm going to invest $175 million in your industry." And guess what? That's exactly what happened.

It's a pattern, Speaker, a pattern. It is not a coincidence; it is a pattern with this government.

Will the Premier admit that the only people who can get on his agenda are the ones who can afford massive donations to his party?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Oakville North–Burlington.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: The leader of the official opposition will know that the horse racing industry

is a long-standing and proud part of Ontario's culture and supports jobs in rural and small-town communities across Ontario.

In response to concerns raised by sector partners about the sustainability of the horse racing industry in Ontario, the government announced an additional $35 million over the next five years to support the long-term viability of live horse racing tracks, protecting over 18,000 jobs across the province.

This funding will support businesses, operators, rural labour jobs and spin-off rural industries through operational and capital funding for racetracks, helping the sector address inflation—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the leader of the third party.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response.

Speaker, I'd like to suggest that we remove the last word from her title, as after yesterday, it doesn't seem to be something that the minister is really good with.

The reality is, in this OSAP scandal, it's the former minister that lit the dumpster fire that's going on over there right now. Two things happened: ignored the Auditor General's report and allowed online, asynchronous learning. It started it all, and then the fundraising rolled in. Hundreds of millions of dollars out the door—wasted. But worse than that, the lives of thousands and thousands of honest, hard-working people were cut off at the knees.

Simple question: Can the minister provide us with a response?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I understand the impact this is having on good students and good institutions. That's why we're working very urgently to move forward with the audit with KPMG. It's why we brought forward the Ontario Provincial Police, because these are very serious allegations—criminal allegations—that have defrauded the Ontario taxpayer.

That's why we have legislation this session that's bringing forward new guardrails to ensure that we can act with confidence when it comes to OSAP. We're cracking down on inappropriate partnerships between recruiters and immigration firms as well as with the institutions themselves. We're ensuring students are actually legitimate students. There are going to be identity checks that are going to be there and we're capping OSAP enrolment at private institutions.

These are, again, very serious allegations. He can trivialize it all he wants, but we take every single tip seriously. We've done over 3,200 individual OSAP investigations since 2020, and we'll continue taking every tip seriously.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Leader of the third party.

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, I'm going to try again, but I'll have to give credit to the current minister because at least he gets out of his seat. He's the only one that gets up. Even though his answers are not based in reality or accurate, he's standing up there.

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: I withdraw.

Speaker, I called on the current minister to resign. I think that the former minister holds as much responsibility as the current minister and that she should resign as well. It's an absolute mess that they've made of thousands and thousands of people's lives—turned upside down. The government's solution now is to indemnify themselves, to get immunity from being sued for the things that they've done to thousands and thousands of honest, hard-working people.

I don't know what I can do to get the former minister to respond, but, Speaker, I think it would be appropriate to at least acknowledge my question.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I'll acknowledge his question. We're restoring OSAP integrity, Speaker.

Since 2024, we realized there was a growing number of applications at private career colleges. That was a concern to our ministry. Career Colleges Ontario, that third-party agency, had the same concerns in January 2025. In May 2025, the federal government completed their investigation and provided the results to my ministry. We did targeted and enhanced inspections. Once we realized how widespread the issue was and that it wasn't just a couple individual institutions, we put a pause across OSAP and the private sector. That is something that needed to happen, because one dollar is one dollar too many if it's not going towards its intended use.

Speaker, we brought in KPMG. We referred it to the Ontario Provincial Police because these are very serious allegations. We need to ensure that OSAP dollars are being utilized for their intended purpose, and that is to help students train for future careers.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the leader of the third party.

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, if this was a movie, it would be called Silence of the Lambs because it's like a bunch of sheep over there. The reality is, the only people who are getting fleeced are the Ontario taxpayers and those honest, hard-working people that you cut off at the knees.

Your solution is not to help them. It's not to get them the loans that you promised them. It's to indemnify yourselves. It's to give yourself immunity. You've done it so many times, I'm sure there's just, "Give us that cut-and-paste that we put into every piece of legislation that we could be in trouble on," which is most of the stuff that you do.

I'm going to give the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response an opportunity to respond.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: As I've said many times in this House, OSAP is there for students working to create a better future for themselves. Anyone who abuses that system will be held accountable. That's why we've brought forward legislation this session, because we understand the urgency of the matter we're dealing with.

Career Colleges Ontario also understands the urgency and the evolving nature of what we're dealing with right

now, Speaker. They've suspended two dozen campuses just recently and sent a letter to my ministry because they understand the impact this is having and the serious allegations that we are dealing with. Thirty-three additional campuses—there are concerns with backdating of applications, which again is a legal matter which we are very concerned about, as well as 13 other campuses that they are investigating as well.

He can trivialize it all he wants. He can make jokes all he wants, but this is a very serious matter, and Career Colleges Ontario understands the impact as well. They've suspended two dozen campuses. If that's not enough for him, Speaker, I'm not too sure—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the leader of the third party.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: Well, I'll move on because there's lots of blame to go around on this OSAP scandal.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance heckled last week when we were talking about his deficit. He called it an itsy-bitsy deficit; I heard it very clearly. It's pretty revealing—because no wonder this minister missed the hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars going out the door; missed all the red flags, if $16.9 billion is itsy-bitsy.

How does the person in charge of Ontario's finances miss for three years all the red flags, all the hundreds of millions of dollars going out the door with nothing to show for it? Can the minister just answer that question? How did you miss it, Minister?

1100

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: "Itsy-bitsy"—I didn't say that, but that's what we get from the minister—the opposition interim leader or whatever that fellow is.

We talked about fighting for our AA. We fought hard to get that; we're going to fight hard to keep it. But you know what else we're going to do and we've done? We've cut the HST for not only first-time homebuyers but all new homes, which is helping our great real estate agents who are here today. They're selling the homes, the dreams of families to get that first home, and as the Minister of Housing said, the numbers are up—the numbers are up; it's working. The policy is working.

But you know who else we are investing in in this province? The good front-line police officers who protect us in our communities. They're here today. They put their lives on the line every single day, and make no mistake, this government is going to walk shoulder to shoulder and support them 365 days of the year—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the leader of the third party

Mr. John Fraser: The minister didn't notice the investment they were making in those strip mall, storefront colleges, but I'll move on from there.

The minister is the one who writes checks; he's responsible for overseeing Ontario's finances. In one year, there's $385 million to seven colleges. We know that in the same year that every college student at a public college didn't get as much money as those seven career colleges got and that OSAP grants grew about $500 million to $1 billion in one fiscal year—and this minister didn't notice. He was busy doing something else. I guess red flags just aren't his thing. There were also 220 warnings that ministers received about career colleges.

Was the minister looking the other way when all this happened?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Madam Speaker, as the minister has highlighted over and over again, he understands the situation, and that's why he's going after the bad actors, that's why he's going to make the program sustainable for the long-term for our students and the education system.

But also, you know what this minister also knows? Making an investment today for tomorrow. That's why $6.4 billion in our colleges and universities, which is helping make the colleges and universities sustainable. In fact, the Priority Growth Fund that the minister launched—another $700 million to support 70,000 new seats at universities and colleges for our students—includes 40,000 science, technology, engineering and math seats, adding up to 125,000—you find me a place in North America that has so many science, technology, engineering and math graduates—includes 18,000 positions for health care workers.

We are not forgetting about our youth, we are not forgetting about the future of this province, and through the leadership of this minister—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the leader of the third party.

Mr. John Fraser: The minister forgets that public colleges in Ontario had to fire 10,000 staff because he didn't give them enough money; he forgets that they eliminated hundreds of courses at dozens of colleges because he didn't give them enough money. That's part of how we got here. Then we were giving more money to these career colleges than every student at a public college—the things that we built together—and this minister wants us to believe that there's nothing to see.

Well, maybe, again, if $16.9 billion is itsy-bitsy, I don't know, what would you call this, Minister? Teeny-weeny?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: There you have it, Madam Speaker, the member opposite: "Itsy-bitsy, teeny-weeny." That's what we get from the member opposite.

I think I've pretty well made my case here. Where do you go with a question like that? I know where you go: $12.5 billion to support the hard-working people of Ontario through affordability measures, cutting the gas tax, cutting the HST, cutting the small business tax. Talk to the 700,000 small businesses that are benefiting through the leadership of this minister of small business cutting the small business tax cut.

When they were in power, guess what they did? They raised taxes, Madam Speaker. We are the party that is cutting taxes, putting more money back in the pockets of people and businesses.

Interjection: A teeny-weeny amount.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: That is not itsy-bitsy. That's not teeny-weeny.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Minister of Education.

In pre-budget consultation hearings yesterday, we heard from the Toronto president of the Catholic school board, and she gave us a shocking look at the impact of the Conservative government's cuts on our classrooms: shortages in pens and pencils; photocopy paper being kept under lock and key, it is that precious; shortages of laptops; 10 textbooks being shared among 32 students; cuts to data storage so severe that kids sometimes cannot even submit their own work online

Minister, how do you expect students to succeed when they don't even have the basics?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I've got my new double-breasted suit, so I'm just going to take a moment to put that together.

Listen, Madam Speaker, you will know that we hear these claims from the opposition, but the reality is that we've actually increased spending across Ontario when it comes to education by literally over 30%. The waste that she's talking about came, ultimately, when there were trustees in charge of that board who were spending money hand over fist for things that were outside of the classroom.

Just yesterday, I believe it was the Leader of the Opposition who was asking me to spend more money on things that were outside of the classroom, and I said, "No. I want more money being spent in the classroom." I'm not going to stop doing that.

But the reality is, it doesn't matter how much money you spend in education if the outcomes don't match the investment. And that is what we are all about: making sure that our students have the opportunity to succeed. It started with the previous minister going back to basics on our curriculum, and each and every year that Conservatives have been in office, student achievement has increased.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for University–Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Minister, if you want to talk about waste, it's this government that hired supervisors who were paid $400,000 a year, and they can't even return a phone call.

I want to talk about class sizes. The Toronto Catholic school board president told us about the state of class sizes in high schools. So many kids are being crammed into classes that teachers are now being forced to teach two courses—two different subject matters at once.

Teachers are right now bargaining for smaller class sizes because they know it helps kids.

Minister, for the sake of our kids, can you bargain in good faith and bring in lower class sizes and invest in our schools?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Let me just acknowledge, say, "Bonjour, monsieur le Premier Ministre."

The Premier, of course, was yesterday in Quebec and highlighted just how amazing the Ontario experience has been. And he was received so well that they're saying that some of the things that we've done here in Ontario, including in education, are some of the things that they would like to see in Quebec—unlocking an economy, unleashing opportunity for people, cutting taxes, investing in education, investing in health care, bringing billions of dollars worth of investments.

So yes, will we continue to invest in education? Absolutely. We've invested over 30% more into education. We have the highest level of spending in the history of the province. And what comes with that, Madam Speaker? What comes with that? Our class sizes actually have not increased since our time in office. We are seeing schools that are safer. We're seeing students that are doing better, Madam Speaker.

So unlike the opposition that like to criticize everything, I'll say this: Our teachers are doing the job that we expect them to do. They need more help and resources. We're going to deliver that for them, and as long as they put student achievement first—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

MPP Stephanie Smyth: When you look at the Minister of Colleges and Universities' OSAP legislation, something is amiss. There's no protection for students, but there is lots of protection for this minister, for this ministry and for his staff. It's called an indemnification clause, and it protects absolutely every member of this government from being held liable for the OSAP scandal in court. That is a pretty big tell: The members opposite know that they are on the hook for this.

1110

So, Speaker, will the Minister of Colleges and Universities tell this House what he doesn't want to be sued for?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: We're going to make sure the bad actors are on the hook for defrauding the Ontario taxpayer. That's why we're bringing forward this legislation to strengthen the accountability, to ensure anyone who intends to abuse OSAP will be held accountable, Speaker.

These are very serious criminal allegations. We've heard of multiple IP addresses being used numerous times, geographic locations that are very centralized.

But with this legislation, we're going to protect OSAP from misuse. We're going to ensure stronger identity verification as well as stronger penalties against those wrongdoers. We're going to make sure that every enforcement action against an institution is published on our website, so students understand the institution that they're applying for.

We're going to pursue all avenues to be able to receive those funds back, those taxpayer funds. We will not rest until we ensure that taxpayer dollars and OSAP dollars are going towards the good students that deserve them.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Toronto–St. Paul's.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Bad actors and guardrails—we're going to start a drinking game soon of the answers from this—and we won't hold up well.

Speaker, this government is trying to rewrite its own role in this scandal, pretending that it is simply stepping up to clean up the mess left by a few bad actors in the private career college system. This government knew about the irregularities in 2023. Make no mistake: They are the bad actors. And now, instead of putting the students first, it's changing the law to protect itself and make itself immune.

This reminds me of what President Richard Nixon said following his resignation in the wake of the Watergate scandal. He said, "When the President does it, that means it is not illegal."

So, Speaker, through you to the minister: Why does this government think, when it does something, that means that it's not illegal?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: That member is attacking me for being consistent with my answers.

The time frames have not changed at all, Speaker. In late 2024, we understood there was a concern with the amount of applications that we were receiving from career colleges. As I've said many times—and she said I do repeat myself, because I've been asked this question numerous times, and I'm very consistent with my answer—in January 2025, Career Colleges Ontario had the exact same concerns that we did.

The federal government completed their investigation in May 2025, and that summer, we did enhanced and targeted inspections into those institutions. We removed eligibility from those six institutions earlier this year, but once we realized how widespread the issue was across OSAP, we had to put a pause on OSAP when it comes to private career colleges and institutions.

We brought in KPMG forensic auditors to be able to bring back the confidence we need before we release another taxpayer dollar towards OSAP in private institutions. These are taxpayer dollars, and one dollar is one dollar too many. We're going to ensure that we bring the confidence back to the OSAP system before—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

MINISTER FOR SENIORS AND ACCESSIBILITY

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, today, we are celebrating an extraordinary milestone for a colleague and a friend who has spent his life serving others. Our Minister for Seniors and Accessibility, the Honourable Raymond Cho, is turning 90.

When he first arrived in Canada from South Korea in 1967, he tirelessly worked three jobs—a miner, a waiter and a janitor—all while putting himself through university. He went on to earn two master's degrees and a doctorate while building a meaningful career in social work.

First elected in 1991, he served the fine people of Scarborough for 35 years and became Ontario's first Korean-born MPP in 2016. The minister has also done a number of mentoring with young leaders. He's led humanitarian missions.

Speaker, my question is simple: Can the minister share what this remarkable journey and a lifetime devoted to helping people mean to him?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you to the member for those kind words and raising that excellent question.

When I came to Canada nearly 60 years ago, I never imagined I would one day stand in this House. This country gave me opportunity, and I have tried every day to give something back. From working three jobs to serving the people of Scarborough, I have always believed that public service is about helping others. I am grateful to my wife, Soon Ok, my family and my community for supporting me. And at 90, I'm not finished yet.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the government House leader.

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, as we celebrate Minister Cho's remarkable 90th birthday, we're also recognizing the difference he continues to make for seniors and people with disabilities.

Since becoming the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility in 2018, he's led by example. He's championed an Ontario where getting old doesn't mean you're getting left behind, and where people of all abilities can participate fully in their communities.

From expanding seniors active living centres to strengthening community grants and improving accessible public spaces, Minister Cho's leadership has helped build practical supports for those who need them closer to home. These programs mean a place to connect with neighbours while staying active, while also giving greater independence for people who have spent their lives building our province.

Speaker, through you, can the minister share how our government is delivering on that commitment?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I believe that every senior deserves to stay active, independent and connected to their community. That's why our government is investing nearly $23 million to support more than 400 seniors active living centre programs across Ontario.

We are also providing $7 million for the Seniors Community Grant Program and investing in more accessible public spaces through the EASE grant. These investments help people make friends and learn new skills while still participating fully in everyday life.

Speaker, turning 90 has not changed my belief that we must keep building a province where everyone can live with dignity.

PARAMEDIC SERVICES

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Paramedics in Peterborough are on strike, and Niagara EMS is next. CUPE Local 911 is handling 50% more calls than in 2020, yet welcomed its smallest recruitment class in three years. Now, 57% are considering leaving.

Niagara Regional Police reported a huge spike in opioid-related overdoses in 2026, and just last week, just under 20 drug poisonings were reported in Niagara. Our paramedics are on the front lines of this crisis, and our

community is on the brink of losing the very people we depend on.

To the Premier, Speaker: Will you commit to working with the Niagara region to deliver fair wages, better mental health benefits and a plan to keep experienced Niagara paramedics on the job?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I know the member opposite understands that these negotiations between the paramedics and their employer are obviously not led by the Ministry of Health. In fact, it is either the local county, city and, in some cases, hospital partners.

But she is absolutely right: The work that our paramedics do every single day, 24/7, is incredible. We've been able to do some amazing stuff, working directly with the paramedics on 911 models of care where paramedics can now, with patient consent, take an individual to a more appropriate treatment centre than only and exclusively an emergency department.

1120

I think of the work our first responders do, whether they're firefighters, paramedics and, of course, police officers, working directly and together to make sure that our communities continue to be safe and well looked after.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Jeff Burch: This government does have the power to set minimum provincial standards, and they refuse to do so. That's the problem.

Paramedics in Niagara are dealing with a staffing crisis and could be on the verge of a strike. Dave Barnett, president of CUPE 911, told me that since 2020, Niagara has hired 230 paramedics but has only seen a net increase of 80 because workers are leaving faster than they can be replaced.

Benefits are treated as an afterthought. A full-time paramedic gets $3,000 in mental health benefits; police get $20,000. A barista working part-time at Starbucks gets $5,000. A part-time paramedic working a full-time contract gets no mental health supports.

With provincial funding at 50%, why is this government failing to address the staffing, retention and mental health crisis in paramedic services?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The member is absolutely right. Our government has been there every single time to ensure that we fund at 50% with our municipal partners. That is a commitment we made at AMO, and we have held to that. Under the great leadership of our Minister of Colleges and Universities, we expanded the number of seats that are available for paramedic students in our post-secondary institutions because we saw the opportunity to train more paramedics in communities.

I think of a program that didn't exist prior and was not in all communities, community paramedicine. Under the leadership of Premier Ford, bringing that organization and program in place to more communities has meant that seniors who are recovering have that opportunity to connect directly with community paramedicine.

Those are the programs that are making an impact in the province of Ontario, and we're absolutely there as a 50-50 partner with our municipal leaders.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: It's clear this government is in a downward spiral. During their latest scandal of wasting hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars on private career college OSAP applications, they got more bad news. Another credit agency doesn't think the government's plan adds up. In 2019, the then finance minister proclaimed that we will achieve a balanced budget by 2023-24. Instead, this government has kicked that can down the road seven times. Last week, S&P moved Ontario's outlook to negative, which means a one in three chance that the province's credit rating will be lowered. That will cost taxpayers millions more. The finance minister used to run a credit rating agency, so he knows this is bad news for Ontario taxpayers.

Speaker, through you to the finance minister: Will he please tell the people of Ontario what this bad news means for them?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Well, Madam Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, yesterday we raised US$3 billion. That's $4.2 billion at excellent spreads in the market, keeping interest rates low. It's clear that markets have confidence in Ontario. When will that member and that party on that side have confidence in Ontarians? It's about time, because it's clear the markets do.

Now let's do a little history lesson here. When they were in power, what did they do? They raised taxes, and they got credit rating downgrades. I was at DBRS, leading DBRS, and we downgraded the province of Ontario in 2009.

What happened under our leadership in 2024? We got a credit rating upgrade. We reversed it. We reduced taxes, and we grew the economy. That's the way you do it. That's what Ontarians expect from us.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Don Valley West.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Speaker, the half-trillion-dollar man has missed the point. The point is, because of this government's wasteful, reckless spending, taxpayers will spend $47 million a day on interest. That means each taxpayer gets a bill for $1,420 to pay for this government's debt. That's a lot of money, especially when Ontarians are facing a cost-of-living crisis, worried about paying for groceries and worried about their jobs.

While this government racked up $160 billion more in debt, workers are facing record levels of unemployment and basic public services are crumbling. Speaker, this cannot continue. We know it, the credit rating agencies know it and Ontarians know it.

Through you to the finance minister: Will he admit it's time to go back to the drawing board and fix Ontario's finances?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: It seems to me, Madam Speaker, through you to the member opposite, that what

she doesn't know is there's something called a pandemic. There's something called tariffs. We are dealing with the situation at hand.

But what we will never do is what they did: raise taxes. Just the opposite—we're cutting taxes. And we're not cutting health care; we're investing in health care.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the minister. The House will come to order.

The minister can continue.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: We're dealing with what's in front of us, and the markets like what we're doing. Ontarians like what we're doing. And you know what else we're doing that they like? Sixty-four billion dollars to build health care infrastructure in this province, $30 billion to build schools, $70 billion to build transit, $30 billion to build hospitals and an energy bill that they refused to do. Guess who's investing in energy infrastructure and putting people to work? It's this government. It's these ministers. You folks should join us. That's what good governance is all about.

EDUCATION ISSUES

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: It's Movember, a month when we talk about men's mental health, suicide prevention and the struggles being faced by our males. Disclaimer: I care about the mental health of all of our young people. I'm the mom of both a boy and a girl.

But a quick Google search of what we are teaching our males, and it's clear we are sending boys the message there is something inherently wrong with them. Their curiosity is suspect. Their masculinity is something to be ashamed about. They are a problem that requires fixing, rather than encouraging them to turn masculine qualities into great strengths.

In Ontario and across the nation, men die by suicide roughly three times the rate of women. And as I was scrolling through Instagram recently, I came across material from a classroom somewhere in the Peel region district school board where a teacher, I assume, associated the following traits with toxic masculinity: stoicism, physical and mental toughness and self-sufficiency.

Speaker, through you to the Premier, are we in Ontario going to accept teachings that exacerbate anti-male biases in our classrooms?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Paul Calandra: No, we won't, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: Yesterday, we heard so much about classroom funding, and I certainly won't diminish the importance of that. But in a world where we talk at length about inclusion, diversity and accepting people for who they are, why are we making resilience, toughness and traditional masculine qualities something to be discouraged? I thought these were the things that the minister was going to clear up.

Why are we celebrating differences in some areas but questioning other qualities that are equally important to a child's development? Resilience shouldn't be a character flaw. Toughness should not be a bad word. Strength, competitiveness, confidence and the ability to persevere through difficult times are things we should be nurturing in all of our children.

It's Movember, and yet we are supporting the notion that boys and young men should just stick their hands in their pockets and put their heads down.

Speaker, will the minister commit today, during the month of Movember, to cleaning up our classrooms so they embrace everyone, foster a sense of belonging and support the mental health and well-being of all children, including our boys?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I do appreciate the question from the honourable member because what it does is it highlights that within our school system across the province of Ontario for many years, we've allowed divisions to occur that tear people apart as opposed to bringing people together. It's one of the things I've talked about constantly since assuming this responsibility, and the ministers before me also spoke about it. It's about depoliticizing our school system, focusing on the things that help our kids absolutely achieve their best, not only while they're in school, but achieve their best opportunity for success in later life.

It is exactly what we've been focusing on: a back-to-basics curriculum that helps them succeed. It's about ensuring that our system focuses on what it is supposed to do: giving our children the right to succeed while eliminating the politics that has torn our schools apart. I hear it over and over and over from teachers: "Let parents parent; let us teach and give us the resources that we need so that we can give our students the best opportunity to succeed."

1130

I agree with the member, and we will not stop until we deliver a school system that allows everybody to succeed equally.

INTERPROVINCIAL TRADE

Mr. Jeff Beattie: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

We all know that the Trump tariffs are continuing to impact our workers and businesses. We're feeling that pain in Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, and our government is leading the efforts to strengthen trade right here at home. We have to foster deeper trade relationships with other provinces and remove red tape to allow workers to move more freely across provincial borders.

We know that Ontario is spearheading the national conversation on removing these interprovincial trade barriers. The objective, of course: to ensure Ontario companies have access to other provincial markets and give workers

the option to be certified in the same professions across Canada.

The benefits of strong interprovincial trade have never been more clear. So, Speaker, what can we see in terms of the progress that's being made? Would the minister please highlight what is taking place in the conversations to strengthen interprovincial trade?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: It really is an interesting question, because interprovincial trade is such an interesting topic when you think about the fact that if we can't trade amongst ourselves, how can we trade around the world?

In 2017, the Canada free trade act was signed, but it's really fascinating to note that one would grab the act and look and say, "It's a great act, but I don't want this part" or "I don't want that part. I'm going to exclude this one." You look at all of these provinces and territories across the country, including the federal government, who have all these exceptions: "You can do this, but you can't do that."

Premier Ford one day said, "Buddy, how many exceptions have we got in Ontario?" We said, "Around 23." He said, "I want none." Well, we've been working for seven years on none. The answer came in this Legislature. We have removed all the exceptions. Ontario is the only province that is leading interprovincial trade that has no exceptions.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Jeff Beattie: I thank the minister for that response. Our current trade reality has sparked a renewed importance on boosting interprovincial trade. It has never been a more important conversation to have.

As we work to diversify trade relationships abroad, we also must bolster our domestic trade relationships as well. For too long, internal trade barriers have hindered our ability to ensure that free trade exists within our own country. Under the leadership of this government, Ontario has been a leader across Canada when it comes to breaking down these internal trade barriers.

Can the minister further highlight the actions that we are taking to reduce trade barriers within Canada?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much. You know, we've always had this free trade agreement, but again, I talk about all these exceptions that we have. On liberation day two years ago, in January—we call it the Trump accelerator. All of a sudden now, all of the other provinces wanted to catch up to Ontario and accelerate this free trade deal. We've been meeting almost every single month, including last Friday: all 13 provinces and territories, the federal government, all following the lead of Ontario.

We have mutual recognition, which means if it's good enough for you, it's good enough for us. We understand it's different, but we accept it.

We have labour mobility. If you're an architect in Manitoba and you want to come and work in Ontario, come on in on Monday and start work. You've got six months to get your paperwork caught up.

And we have a direct-to-consumer alcohol portion of it. If you buy a bottle of wine in Niagara and you like it and you take it home and you want more, you can now be able to contact them from Saskatchewan and get more. This is what free trade is amongst—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Toronto–Danforth.

EDUCATION ISSUES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Minister of Education: Eastdale Collegiate in my riding provides critical support to students who, for a variety of reasons, need extra assistance to succeed in school. The future of the school and its students is now uncertain. Parents tell me the TDSB supervisor won't respond to them as they try to get answers about the school's future. Will the minister order the supervisor to respond to parents?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Across the province of Ontario, including at the Toronto District School Board, there are always refinements that are made in the system.

The school the member is mentioning is one that is a declining-enrolment school, if I'm not mistaken. I'll certainly take a look at it for the honourable gentleman.

When there is declining enrolment in certain schools, it is up to the board to ensure that a full program can be offered to its students in the most effective fashion. If that is not the case, then the board is responsible and moves very quickly to ensure that its students can have the absolute best experience possible. And sometimes that does mean that kids will move from one school to another school to ensure that they get that full educational experience.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Perhaps the minister didn't hear the question.

The supervisor is not responding to parents who have questions. It's a very straightforward thing. This minister has made commitments to parents and students to protect their interests. Right now, parents say they can't even get a response from the supervisor, let alone talk about the larger questions of enrolment—a supervisor he appointed.

Why does it take a question to the minister to get the supervisor to respond to parents' questions?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Actually, it doesn't. What the parent can do and what the member himself can do is also call the student and family support offices, which we established, which are active in every single school board across the province of Ontario. You can call them and you can start a complaint or you can ask for a question to be answered. A file is opened, which was never the case before, and they have a certain amount of time in which they have to respond to you—48 hours to acknowledge your request, and five days in order to solve that problem.

So I would suggest to the member opposite that he contact the student and family support offices at the

Toronto District School Board—who have had, colleagues, a close to 90% success rate in answering the questions of parents and students at that board. So he can do that, the parents can do that. I suggest that that is the first step that he take.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Speaker, please welcome a beautiful Beaches–East Yorker to the chamber today: Holly Wardlow. Unfortunately, she has cholangiocarcinoma with an NRG1 gene fusion. Treated by an approved cancer drug under Health Canada's Special Access Program, Holly's tumour miraculously shrunk, cause for celebration and hope. Yet, when it came time for Ontario to fund this critical treatment, after Holly had exhausted her life savings, the advice of world-renowned doctors was ignored.

The Minister of Health has insisted time and again that we should leave these decisions to the experts. So here we go: Dr. Robert Grant, Princess Margaret oncologist, warned that without this drug, Holly won't last a year. Dr. James Cleary, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute oncologist and Harvard associate professor of medicine, declares this drug be approved without delay.

Speaker, my question to the Minister of Health: Will you walk the talk and listen to the experts?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As the member knows, there is a process through Health Canada for drugs to be approved before they can be considered for funding through our publicly funded OHIP model.

I will say that as we move forward with programs like FAST, making sure that cancer drugs are available faster in the province of Ontario—this week, I met with Innovative Medicines Canada. And in fact, because of the FAST program, we've had nine new cancer treatments available in the province of Ontario over one year faster. Those are initiatives that we have here, made in Ontario, designed in Ontario. We want to make sure that those 5,000 clinical trials that are happening today in the province of Ontario have an opportunity to be manufactured and made available through our publicly funded system.

I cannot presuppose a Health Canada approval for a drug that is in—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Don Valley East.

Mr. Adil Shamji: Madam Speaker, the FAST program will not help Holly because Holly is the only person who needs this drug.

The Minister of Health has always said that Ontario patients will pay with their OHIP card and not their credit card, and then she gutted the programs that allow patients to access international cancer treatments. In Holly's case, she applied to the case-by-case review program for a Health Canada-approved special access drug from abroad to be received here in Ontario. Holly has exhausted her personal savings, she has borrowed from family and is staying alive now because of a GoFundMe. Holly is here today sitting behind me in the public gallery.

The minister told us yesterday that we're exploiting patients for political gain, but the only person who's being exploited here is Holly, who was given a promise by our health care system that it would be there for her. Instead, she has been abandoned and is living day to day. She doesn't have the money for her December and January doses.

Minister, will you tell Holly whether you'll fund her treatment and save her life?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As a physician, I would have hoped that you would understand this process better. Speaker, it amazes me that someone who should understand how Health Canada works—how a PCPA process works in terms of regulating health and access to medicines in the province of Ontario. We are going to absolutely continue to push our pharmaceuticals, to push our manufacturers to make sure that clinical trials happen in the province of Ontario, that they are listing those innovative medicines, and part of that work is absolutely within the Ministry of Health.

Whether it is a health innovation pathway that, again, expedites new and innovative medicines and ideas in the province of Ontario—when we do that, we build a made-in-Canada, made-in-Ontario solution, and we're going to keep doing that work.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

MPP Bill Rosenberg: My question is for the Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth.

Northern Ontario's agriculture sector continues to grow and create new opportunities for families, businesses and communities. A big reason for that success is our government's support for tile drainage projects, which are helping unlock new farmland and improve agricultural productivity across the north. In my riding, I've seen first-hand how the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund tile drainage program helps farmers install tile drainage systems, increasing both the amount and quality of arable land. Through these investments, more land is being brought into production and local agricultural businesses are growing.

Can the minister share how this program is helping strengthen the agricultural sector across northern Ontario?

Hon. George Pirie: Thank you for the question. You're quite correct: Tile drainage is critical for the production of arable land in northern Ontario. Our government has put in $31 million into tile drainage, supporting the development of 50,000 acres of arable land, including 6,000 acres alone in Iroquois Falls.

The soil is rich. There are 10 million acres of arable land in the Great Clay Belt alone—more than Manitoba, equal to southern Ontario. It has the potential to feed the globe and we're doing it right here in northern Ontario, from Manitoba to the Quebec border, right into Timmins, Iroquois Falls and all across Kapuskasing. The soil is rich—you can taste the carrots when you squeeze that black soil.

DEFERRED VOTES

HEALTH CARE HONOURS, EMPLOYMENT, RETENTION, OPTIMIZATION AND EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 SUR LA STRATÉGIE EN MATIÈRE DE DISTINCTIONS, D'EMPLOI, DE RÉTENTION, D'OPTIMISATION ET DU DÉVELOPPEMENT DE L'AUTONOMIE DANS LE SECTEUR DE LA SANTÉ

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 133, An Act to provide for the development of a health care worker support strategy respecting honours, employment, retention, optimization and empowerment and to make related amendments / Projet de loi 133, Loi prévoyant l'élaboration d'une stratégie d'appui aux travailleurs de la santé à l'égard des distinctions, de l'emploi, de la rétention, de l'optimisation et du développement de l'autonomie et apportant des modifications connexes.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1144 to 1148.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Members, please take your seats.

On November 17, 2026, Mr. Shamji moved second reading of Bill 133, An Act to provide for the development of a health care worker support strategy respecting honours, employment, retention, optimization and empowerment and to make related amendments.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gilmour, Alexa	Shamji, Adil
Bell, Jessica	Glover, Chris	Shaw, Sandy
Blais, Stephen	Gretzky, Lisa	Smyth, Stephanie
Bourgouin, Guy	Hsu, Ted	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Kernaghan, Terence	Stiles, Marit
Burch, Jeff	Mamakwa, Sol	Tabuns, Peter
Cerjanec, Rob	McCrimmon, Karen	Tsao, Jonathan
Clancy, Aislinn	McKenney, Catherine	Vanthof, John
Collard, Lucille	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vaugeois, Lise
Fife, Catherine	Pasma, Chandra	Watt, Tyler
Fraser, John	Rakocevic, Tom	West, Jamie
French, Jennifer K.	Sattler, Peggy	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Gates, Wayne	Schreiner, Mike	
Gélinas, France	Shaban, Fatima	

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Allsopp, Tyler	Flack, Rob	Pirie, George
Anand, Deepak	Ford, Doug	Quinn, Nolan
Babikian, Aris	Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Racinsky, Joseph
Bailey, Robert	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rae, Matthew
Beattie, Jeff	Gualtieri, Silvia	Rickford, Greg
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Hardeman, Ernie	Riddell, Brian
Bouma, Will	Harris, Mike	Rosenberg, Bill
Bresee, Ric	Holland, Kevin	Sabawy, Sheref
Calandra, Paul	Jones, Sylvia	Sandhu, Amarjot
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jones, Trevor	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Cho, Stan	Jordan, John	Saunderson, Brian
Ciriello, Monica	Kanapathi, Logan	Smith, Dave
Clark, Steve	Kerzner, Michael S.	Smith, David
Coe, Lorne	Khanjin, Andrea	Smith, Graydon
Cooper, Michelle	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Smith, Laura
Crawford, Stephen	Lahey, Susan	Surma, Kinga
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Leardi, Anthony	Tangri, Nina
Darouze, George	Lecce, Stephen	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Denault, Billy	McCarthy, Todd J.	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dixon, Jess	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tibollo, Michael A.
Dowie, Andrew	Pang, Billy	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Downey, Doug	Parsa, Michael	Vickers, Paul
Dunlop, Jill	Piccini, David	Williams, Charmaine A.
Fedeli, Victor	Pierre, Natalie	
Firin, Mohamed	Pinsonneault, Steve	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 40; the nays are 73.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 3.

The House recessed from 1153 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I wanted to extend my earlier acknowledgements. From the Windsor-Essex County Association of Realtors, we were paid a visit by—oh.

Speaker, I apologize. Let me pass it on to another member, and I'll get my brain working again.

M^me^ France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to introduce Austin and Leah Toth, who are here today joining us for petitions. Thank you for being here.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Alyssa Ismail and Tina Roy from the WECAR, we're grateful for your visit today.

To all members of the Windsor Police Association—Kent Rice, Mike Hradowy, Rick Derus, Shannon Tennant, Wayne and just the entire crew, we're grateful for your visit. Thanks so much.

MPP George Darouze: It's a pleasure to introduce a few members from the Police Association of Ontario, some local members from Ottawa today, including Matthew Cox, Lisa Bianco, Devon Archer, Chris Lavergne, Amanda Munro, Barmak Anvari, Cameron Entwistle, Leslie McCarthy and Jason Meehan. I'm looking forward to meeting with them today.

Keep advocating for our community. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. As you know, Kiiwetinoong is quite a ways from here, and we

hardly have anybody from Kiiwetinoong here. But as the First Peoples of these lands, I would like to welcome everyone who is here. Meegwetch.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ANDERANA LODGE FAMILY SOCIETY INC. ACT, 2026

Mr. Riddell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr60, An Act to revive Anderana Lodge Family Society Inc.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

JORDAN HEFFERN MEMORIAL ACT (PREVENTING NURSE SUICIDES), 2026

LOI DE 2026 COMMÉMORANT JORDAN HEFFERN (PRÉVENTION DU SUICIDE CHEZ LES INFIRMIÈRES ET INFIRMIERS)

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 153, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act, the Public Hospitals Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 153, Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé, la Loi sur les hôpitaux publics et la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Would the member like to briefly explain the bill?

M^me^ France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. The short title of the bill is called Jordan Heffern Memorial Act (Preventing Nurse Suicides).

Basically, what the bill does is—two researchers from Laurentian University—two nurses—did this research that shows that the number of nurses that have suicidal thoughts, the number of nurses that have considered suicide is at a very, very high level. We're talking 41% of nurses in Ontario that have had suicidal thoughts. We are talking about a number of nurses that are contemplating suicide because of their work.

Jordan Heffern is a young nurse from Sudbury who, not even two years into a full-time job at the hospital, took her own life because of what happened.

The researchers from Laurentian University got the statistics, but they also put recommendations forward. I took those recommendations and put them into a bill, because I think we all agree: If we can support nurses in their times of need, we should do it.

The first recommendation was to put in place a maximum patient-to-nurse ratio so that nurses have a workload that a human being can handle. They also ask that trauma-informed leadership training be available for management in all hospitals that would be focused on establishing psychological safety for all health care workers to eliminate the stigma that has to do with mental health.

They also ask that within six months the hospital implement a 12-month orientation program for all new graduate nurses, with a reduced workload and mentoring from an experienced nurse.

Then, they also ask that the hospital co-operate with law enforcement when nurses face assault, threats and violence at work so that if they decide to press charges, the hospital co-operate with them. It would be the decision of the nurse, though, whether she or he wants to move forward with that. If they do, then the hospital would be mandated to co-operate with law enforcement to respect any criminal charges that are laid.

As well, under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, if a nurse experiences a mental health problem, she would be covered by WSIB.

That's what's in the bill. Thank you, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I will remind all members that the brief explanation of the bill is to explain what the bill does, not why it does it.

PETITIONS

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

MPP Lise Vaugeois: This is a petition about the WSIB. It's about protesting against the closures of regional WSIB offices across the province and particularly in the north. Some 717 workers will be losing their jobs. Over 500 have already lost their jobs. This has nothing to do with tariffs; this has everything to do with giving money back to employers at the expense of workers, and service being available to workers. It's quite shocking, I must say, that we are losing that many jobs across Ontario—very, very important jobs—that are actually decimating our communities as well.

I fully support this petition and will give it to Amira with my signature.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

MPP George Darouze: I'm pleased to present another petition signed by some of my constituents in my riding of Carleton this afternoon. This petition relates to waste management in Ontario.

In Ottawa and many other cities across Ontario, landfill capacity and waste management are a concern. I know this from my time in Ottawa city council, where they are considering next steps for Ottawa's waste management future.

We have also realized that our dependence on exporting waste to the United States is not a long-term solution to waste management future. We have also realized that our dependence on exporting waste to the United States is not a long-term solution to waste management in Ontario.

1510

This petition calls on the government to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to expand Ontario's domestic waste management, including recycling, organic processing and energy-from-waste capacity, reducing the need to export waste and focusing on a strong environmental circular economy in Ontario.

I support this petition, will sign my name to it, and will give it to page Reese to give it to the Clerk.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Ms. Catherine Fife: Before I read my petition, I just want to recognize my predecessor, Elizabeth Witmer, who was the MPP for Waterloo in the 33rd, 34th, 35th and 36th Parliaments. Welcome back to your House.

This petition, Mr. Speaker, pertains to the cuts that are happening with WSIB. The Legislative Assembly of Ontario accepts petitions based on the work that is happening in our communities, and certainly there are serious concerns around the loss of jobs. Waterloo itself will be losing 155 positions going forward.

We value these workers in WSIB. They perform incredibly important work—some may even say life-saving work when you consider workers who are injured and have faced post-traumatic stress disorder. We are very much hoping that this government recognizes the value that WSIB employees do in our communities and the benefits that they bring to our communities as a whole.

It's my pleasure to affix my signature to this petition and give it to Emily to deliver to the table.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

MPP Paul Vickers: I'd like to bring forward a petition from my constituents in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound who are very concerned about what's happening with the available landfill capacity. Right now, we export close to three million tonnes of waste annually to landfills in the United States. It creates a dependence on waste disposal infrastructure outside of our country.

Ontario faces an increasing pressure on landfill capacity, and provincial analysis indicates that existing private sector landfill capacity could be exhausted within seven years. Ontario has only approved one large landfill in the last 20 years. The province has identified that if access to the United States' landfills was disrupted, three million tonnes of waste would have to come back and be left in our province.

This would fill the landfills very quickly, and it would cause great concern. We don't want to see people not having their garbage picked up. If I've learned one thing from my municipal days, it's as long as the garbage leaves the end of the people's lanes, they are happy. They don't really care where it goes, but it's our responsibility to make sure we know where it goes.

Therefore, the undersigned on this petition want the government of Ontario to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to expand Ontario's domestic waste management, recycling, organics processing, resource recovery and energy-from-waste capacity, with the goal of reducing and ultimately ending Ontario's reliance on exporting municipal and industrial waste to the United States, while supporting job creation, environmental sustainability and a made-in-Ontario circular economy.

I will be happy to sign my name to this petition and give it to Daniel to take it to the table.

CANCER TREATMENT

M^me^ France Gélinas: I would like to thank Austin and Leah Toth for this petition. There are 3,637 signatures on this petition, and it basically has to do with the closure of services at the Huntsville hospital. If you focus on cancer, cancer is Ontario's leading cause of death, and the Huntsville cancer clinic currently provides vital oncology services to the residents of Huntsville and the surrounding community.

Cancer patients require frequent visits for treatment, making proximity to care a critical factor in their well-being and adherence to treatment and better outcomes. Rural and northern residents already experience barriers to accessing health care, including weather, financial constraints and access to a vehicle and driver, especially in the winter.

Eighteen villages and townships have passed resolutions, and 3,637 people from Huntsville and area have signed this petition. They petition the Legislative Assembly to direct Ontario Health to ensure that the cancer clinic remains at the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital site.

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask my good page Reese to bring it to the Clerk.

RED TAPE REDUCTION

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'd like to take this opportunity to thank John Evola from LaSalle for sending in this petition. This petition talks about archaeological assessments, which are very important and necessary in some situations. But at the same time, 98% of all archaeological assessments ultimately approve the proposed building that is being requested. So, what this petition says is we should be implementing a system that is similar to the system that exists in other jurisdictions, such as New Zealand and in various countries in Europe, and that we should have a more streamlined system of archaeological assessments so that we don't waste unnecessary time in duplicating processes that have already been done many times before.

The petition asks this Legislative Assembly to implement a risk-based approval process, a streamlined assessment process, one that will protect significant heritage resources but, at the same time, reduce unnecessary delays. I think we can all agree with that.

I will support this petition, sign it, pass it to this fine page and ask her to bring it to the Clerks' table.

HOMELESSNESS

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I want to thank Karen Orlandi, Valear Howsam and Syl Roach for presenting me with this petition. This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it's "Strengthening Supportive Housing in Niagara." The report was prepared for Niagara regional council, and it indicates that homelessness in Niagara grew from 465 people in 2016 to 701 in 2024, 78% depended on Ontario Works or Ontario disability support, the monthly income gap for access to small-unit rental housing was $696 on ODSP and $966 on OW, 70% with mental health issues, 54% with substance abuse, 59% with chronic or acute medical conditions, and 36.4% with physical disabilities.

The National Housing Strategy Act required a human-rights-based approach to housing strategy. Failing to provide adequate housing is like a failure to comply with the rights to life, security and equality under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Speaker, this petition: Meet legal requirements to ensure the appropriate housing and the needs of Niagara's homeless population by funding the Niagara region's supportive housing strategy, published in July 2025. The strategy is based, again, on the report's findings and is designed to meet those needs in a cost-effective rights-based manner, thereby saving more than current costs for emergency room visits, hospital stays, jails and interventions by emergency services and police.

I fully support this petition. I affix my name and send it to Emily.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Peggy Sattler: November is Woman Abuse Prevention Month, and I am very proud to present a petition that is entitled "Pass the Safe Night Out Act." The Safe Night Out Act is a bill that I was proud to introduce in the Legislature that would make bars, nightclubs and other hospitality establishments safer for patrons and staff by requiring training in sexual violence and harassment prevention.

We know that sexual assault is at unprecedented levels. We have an epidemic of sexual violence in this province and this country. Two thirds of women report experiencing unwanted sexual advances while they are in a licensed establishment, and incidents of sexual assaults involving drugs or alcohol often occur immediately after leaving a licensed establishment. So having a mandate, a legal requirement for liquor licence holders to provide training for staff and security and supervisors to recognize and intervene when there is a risk of sexual harassment would certainly help keep people safe.

1520

We also know that servers face higher risks of sexual violence and harassment when they are in licensed establishments, so the bill also includes strengthened protections for servers.

I am very proud to support this petition, which calls on the Legislative Assembly to pass the Safe Night Out Act. I will sign it and send it to the table with page Chelsea.

HIGHWAY 69

MPP Paul Vickers: I would like to bring a petition forward. My constituents have concerns about Highway 69.

Highway 69 is a primary transportation corridor between northeastern Ontario and southern Ontario that serves as a critical route for residents, businesses, tourists, emergency services and movement of goods across the province.

For decades, Ontario has been working toward completing four-laning of Highway 69 between Parry Sound and Sudbury, but there still are 68 kilometres of that corridor that remain unfinished, creating a significant bottleneck in northern Ontario's transportation network. The remaining two lanes of Highway 69 experience heavy commercial, industrial and recreational traffic, and continue to present safety concerns due to limited passing opportunities, highway closures and collisions that can disrupt travel and the movement of goods throughout northern Ontario.

Each fall, there are many loads of cattle that are transported from the western provinces down into southern Ontario to be finished. When that road is closed—that is a vital link, a vital way for those cattle to come down to Ontario. So it's important that we keep in mind that it's not just for people, but it's also for the agriculture industry.

Northern Ontario is home to globally significant mining, forestry, manufacturing, agriculture, tourism and critical minerals sectors that depend on reliable transportation, like I said before.

Completing an expansion of Highway 69 would improve road safety, strengthen supply chains, support northern resource development, expand tourism opportunities, improve access to services, enhance emergency response capability and support long-term economic growth across northern Ontario.

Therefore, be it resolved that the government of Ontario prioritize and accelerate the completion of the remaining 68 kilometres of the four-laning of Highway 69 between Parry Sound and Sudbury, including advancing approvals, procurement, design, construction and an Indigenous consultation process, so that this is a vital transportation corridor and can be completed as quickly and safely as possible for the benefit of northern Ontario residents, communities and businesses. We heard that if this happens, we could actually take five years off the process of completing this project. So this is why it's important to the people of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

I'm happy to attach my name to it and send it to the table with Amira.

VISITOR

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Before I move to orders of the day, I would like to formally recognize a

former member sitting in the Speaker's gallery: Elizabeth Witmer, the member for Waterloo North in the 35th and 36th Parliaments and the member for Kitchener–Waterloo in the 37th, 38th, 39th and 40th Parliaments.

Welcome back, member.

Applause.

AUSMA MALIK

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Point of order.

Mr. Chris Glover: I just wanted to announce and give my congratulations to my municipal counterpart, Ausma Malik. She has been elected the Speaker of Toronto city council. Can we give her a big round of applause, everybody?

Applause.

Mr. Chris Glover: And one other point of order: I see the members of the Ontario Real Estate Association have walked into the House. I just want to give a special welcome to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I thank the member, but that is not a point of order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECT ONTARIO FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 VISANT À PROTÉGER LES FAMILLES ET LES COLLECTIVITÉS EN ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 18, 2026, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 148, An Act to enact the Intimate Images Protection Act, 2026 and to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 148, Loi édictant la Loi de 2026 sur la protection des images intimes et modifiant diverses lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: Speaker, I know you just did this, but I too want to welcome Elizabeth Witmer to the Legislature. Not only did she serve as Deputy Premier, but she actually set history and was a trailblazer for a lot of women who are now legislators in this assembly, for being the first elected female in the Waterloo region in terms of her legacy as member of provincial Parliament. Thank you for your dedication to service—much appreciated.

I know she got to serve with my predecessor, Julia Munro, who will always be lovely and remembered as Lady Munro. I will never forget what she taught us in terms of the Magna Carta and her license plate that said, "Democracy: Don't waste it."

So here I am, Speaker, in the democratic assembly of the Ontario Legislature speaking about another very important bill that really puts Ontarians and the most vulnerable at the heart of everything we do. As I was speaking about previously just before question period on this bill—I was talking about the changes we've made to children's aid societies and the investments that have been done by Minister Parsa and his team, and the hard work they've put into the file by listening to families and really being in tune with the needs of families, caregivers and the support workers on the front lines.

That's what the goal is in this piece of legislation: When it comes to early intervention, it matters; when it comes to clear communication, it matters; and giving families meaningful information about available services matters. This is part of building a system that looks for opportunities to support families before challenges become more difficult to address. A stronger child welfare system is one that combines effective protections with meaningful support.

Speaker, we also know that when it comes to vulnerable children—the other piece of this legislation when it comes to not only children's aid societies, but also the most vulnerable children and youth—they face risks that can be difficult to identify. One of those risks, and we see this in many of our communities, is human trafficking. It is a devastating form of exploitation that can have lasting consequences for victims, their families and the communities around them.

This is not an issue that affects only one part of Ontario; it is a concern for communities across our province. It is disgusting that those perpetrators come to communities and small towns like the ones that I represent, come to music festivals where so many people want to have fun, and use that opportunity to lure people into human trafficking. This government, outside of this legislation, has said, "Enough," and we've put in safeguards and actual proper mechanisms when it comes to tackling human trafficking. This bill builds on that work and that vision.

Children and youth experiencing instability, isolation or other vulnerabilities can be at high-risk, but child welfare workers with training can often recognize the warning signs and connect young people with appropriate supports. This legislation before you, Bill 148, aims to combat trafficking by introducing mandatory specialized training for child welfare workers to utilize sexual exploitation youth risk assessment tools, so that they are better equipped to identify children who are at risk or at risk of being sexually exploited.

Specialized training helps front-line professionals better understand the indicators of trafficking and the circumstances that can make children and youth vulnerable to exploitation, and the earlier we can identify and create opportunities to intervene before harm becomes even more serious, the better. That is what we're doing, because children, families and Ontarians expect better.

Speaker, I want to recognize the organizations in my region that have been working with the vulnerable sector. When you talk about children and youth and the supports that we're adding on into this bill, I think of the Women and Children's Shelter in Barrie and all the work they do. And so many people in the community, including the Ontario realtors who are here today, support organizations

like this in our community. They give back, they do charitable events, and so many small businesses stand behind the great work that the Women and Children's Shelter of Barrie does. They support children and women alike experiencing violence, including providing emergency shelter, counselling and safety planning. Through its partnership with Project Safe Horizon, something that this government worked with local law enforcement on, it provides support for individuals experiencing human trafficking.

1530

I know today, also in the Legislature, we have members of the Ontario police association. I welcome them too. I want to thank them for their work—and we've got members here from Barrie as well. Again, Project Safe Horizon—the support that they provide our community wouldn't be possible without their partnership.

The work that, again, is done by this government—the leadership of Minister Parsa and so many of our government members who recognize that this has to be a whole, holistic approach. This legislation really builds on all those supports and policies.

But this work really demonstrates the importance of having trusted community organizations that people can turn to when they need help. The Women and Children's Shelter is an example of one of those trusted organizations.

Our government is working to ensure families and front-line professionals have the training and tools they need to recognize the warning signs that individuals experiencing exploitation may identify.

This work builds on what we've already done within, say, the Ministry of Education and through the school system as well when it comes to that. I know many of my colleagues in this Legislature who are passionate about the subject have introduced their own private members' bills, which have now become law, to recognize the importance and the education in this field.

But, Speaker, prevention in these situations requires a system that recognizes risks and responds effectively with practical tools and trained professionals. We are working to ensure that communities have resources so that when something is wrong, there are organizations ready to connect people with help.

Prevention also means looking beyond traditional service settings and recognizing the places where human trafficking can occur. Our highways and transportation corridors are an important part of daily life in Ontario. They connect our communities, support our economy, and they are used by thousands of commuters, families and commercial drivers every day. That is why our government is taking action to strengthen awareness and safety at transportation hubs, including ONroutes like the ones in Innisfil and in Barrie.

This has galvanized so many community members who want to help raise awareness when it comes to human trafficking. I think of Lesley, who runs DriveWise in Barrie, and the work that she does on her trucks, where she does full ads to raise awareness about human trafficking, recognizing the signs and, for those who need help, where to go, who to call and what symbols to give individuals who are trained to recognize the signs of human trafficking and those who want to get out.

But this speaks to what we talked about as a government on February 22, 2026, when our government announced its investments of $345 million into our anti-human trafficking strategy. This piece of legislation builds on that strategy. It was historic. It was actually the largest investment of its kind not just in Ontario but in Canada. The announcement also identified improvements to safety at ONroute locations, including better lighting, security cameras and displaying information about national human trafficking hotlines.

This is work that has already been done. These are investments that have been made. This piece of legislation complements that work that the government already took action on, has already started on and continues to do, because this type of work isn't important for one day, it's not important for just one bill, but it's a continuation of never giving up on the most vulnerable in our society. That is something every government member here cares about.

Speaker, many of these measures may be practical in nature, but they hit home for so many people who need it most. We can help make transportation hubs safer and ensure that information about where to seek help is visible and accessible. By increasing awareness and providing education, we can help more people understand the warning signs of human trafficking and know how to respond appropriately. This is a coordinated, province-wide effort that recognizes the importance of prevention, early intervention and specialized supports for those who have experienced exploitation.

For anyone who needs or wants to report potential cases of human trafficking, the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline is available confidentially, free of charge, 24 hours, seven days a week. It's 1-833-900-1010.

Whether it's a child welfare professional recognizing the warning signs, community organizations supporting a survivor or a transportation worker looking to help raise awareness at an Ontario ONroute service, every part of our community has a role to play. We want to build a province where exploitation is recognized earlier, where victims know that help is available and where those responsible are held to account.

Speaker, people deserve to feel safe in their homes, in their relationships and in their everyday lives. Bill 148 also takes important steps to address intimate image abuse and strengthen protections for people who have experienced gender-based violence.

For decades, organizations have provided a safe place for women and children experiencing abuse and have helped families navigate difficult and sometimes dangerous circumstances. These are essential services that help individuals navigate difficult circumstances and take steps towards rebuilding their lives.

As part of Bill 148, we are furthering our responses to intimate partner violence by introducing stronger legislative protections for victims when it comes to intimate image abuse.

Our government understands that addressing gender-based violence requires sustained action. You'll recall that in December 2025, the Standing Committee on Justice Policy tabled its study on intimate partner violence and reported it to this Legislature. If you haven't seen this report, you just need to look around the corner to my great colleague from Kitchener South–Hespeler, who has a copy of this report on her desk at all times. Why? Because not only is she passionate about this subject, but she wants to take that passion and put it into action in meaningful legislation every day. I want to thank her for her contributions to this bill as well.

That report reflects the voices of survivors, academic experts, front-line organizations and police services across Ontario. I myself have spoken to different police constables on the topic of this particular report. The great work that Val Gates does at Barrie police when she helps victims of intimate partner violence—she helps the most vulnerable in our communities, and she's taking her experience globally with what she has learned here in Ontario on what she could teach other police forces in terms of training, supports and helping the most vulnerable in our community.

As I do wrap up, there is so much to say about this piece of legislation, but what I want to leave you with is returning to the people that are at the heart of this legislation. Think about the parent who needs support navigating a difficult situation with their child. Think about the at-risk youth who needs someone to recognize the warning signs. And think about the survivors who deserve meaningful protection; the individuals who turn to a social worker in a moment of vulnerability and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

Our responsibility is to ensure that when someone in our community needs help, Ontario is ready to support them. So I ask all members of this Legislature, please support this bill, and let's send a strong message to these communities: We have your back.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I listened to the minister's remarks, and she said at the end that there are so many issues to talk about in this bill. But two of the schedules that she did not mention at all concern the indemnification of the government against any legal action that might be taken with regards to the government's complete mishandling and incompetence related to private career colleges and OSAP. We know that a billion dollars went out the door—much of that fraudulently, as we will learn in the courts—to a handful of private career colleges.

So I wanted to ask the member, given the suffering that so many private career college students are experiencing right now in Ontario, how will this bill ensure that those students are made whole for the government's error?

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: I want to thank the member opposite for allowing me to address such an important and vital part of this legislation that I wasn't able to speak to in my 15 minutes. That really speaks to the weight and substantial nature of this government's legislation that we're introducing every day, because we talk to people from all different walks across Ontario when we build these bills, and students are part of that.

As I was looking up the section that she's specifically referring to, what you'll notice in this legislation is that we're strengthening accountability to ensure anyone who attempts to abuse our OSAP system for personal gain is held accountable to the full extent of the law. It is codified in this legislation, and with this legislation, our government would better protect OSAP from misuse, enforce stronger penalties against wrongdoers and stop bad actors in their tracks.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

MPP Paul Vickers: I wanted to ask my fellow member a question about transparency and oversight of children care.

1540

Speaker, the quality of child care received should always be our foremost consideration when making decisions about out-of-home placements. As our child welfare system continues to evolve, we must ensure that placement costs are reasonable, service providers are held accountable and resources are directed towards the children and youth who need it the most.

Can the member speak to the steps our government is taking to strengthen oversight of out-of-home care costs, improve transparency among service providers and ensure that our child welfare system remains both sustainable and focused on the best interests of children?

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you.

I was saying in my speech that any government works really hard for the individuals of Ontario, and we need to respect their hard-earned dollars. That is something this government has always done. You'll notice that in budget 2024, for instance, where we invested an additional and historic $310 million over three years to support community organizations delivering essential services and the investments we've made to community children's aid societies.

As much as we've made these investments, we've also heard—and there was, obviously, an independent audit done about how there could be, again, more accountability, more transparency when it comes to the dollars that are supposed to serve the most vulnerable in our community.

So that is what this bill addresses. It's making sure every single one of those dollars is maximized to help the people who need it most, our vulnerable sectors and then the children who are at the heart of the particular section that the member's talking about.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the member opposite for her comments on protecting Ontario families and communities.

Clearly, there are huge gaps in the plan or strategy of this government to protect and support families. Schedule 6 of this bill around amending the Fixing Long-Term Care Act has a number of schedules that are seriously concerning.

One of them has the fact that the government will be mandating organized programs of dementia care. Of course, we need dementia care in our long-term-care homes. However, we just had AdvantAge Ontario here on Monday. They are laying off workers because the government is only funding at 2% whereas collective bargaining has settled at 4%. So we are in the process of losing front-line health care workers in long-term care, and the government has now brought in another level of programming.

Will the government meet the long-term-care system where it is right now, which is in crisis, and support the programs that are actually in this bill?

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you.

The section that the member is talking about in terms of long-term care is again codifying the legislation to make memory care mandatory amongst many of our homes. As she well knows, many homes offer memory care, but, again, it's not mandated. This is building on this government's initiative to, again, run long-term-care homes when it comes to, say, making them more comfortable by putting in air conditioning, including when it comes to funding for the training for the individuals who work at the long-term-care homes.

I can speak to my community in Barrie, for example, where the Alzheimer Society of Simcoe County received $93,000 from the provincial government to be able to run dementia prevention programs throughout the community. So as much as we're doing the prevention and out-of-long-term-care services, we're working with service providers like the Alzheimer Society. We're tackling it in the communities.

We're also tackling it in our hospitals. We have a standalone coordinator who can address dementia patients when they're coming to emergency, and now this builds on it by codifying it into all our long-term-care homes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Mr. John Jordan: Part of this bill deals with social workers. I've had the pleasure to work with social workers in my career. I know that they're a regulated college. They seek out supervision for their most difficult cases.

I wonder if you can talk about how this bill strengthens the accountability of social workers in Ontario.

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: Most of us assume when individuals go to school to be a social worker, they have all the best intent to help children. But we do need to have a mechanism where, for those who might be there for nefarious reasons, who are abusing the most vulnerable in our society, the full consequences of the law in terms of what we can control at the Ontario level is thrown at those individuals. So we're sending a strong message here in terms of those who choose to prey on those most vulnerable.

But we're also sending a message that we will invest, again, for more training for those who are there for the right reasons. Speaker, what you'll see here is an investment in the people who want to do right by the system and the training but also respect for all the taxpayers, individuals in terms of where their money is going, and saving the full force of the law for those who abuse the most vulnerable.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm going to back to the schedules of the bill that pertain to seniors and to long-term care: schedule 12, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Appeal and Review Boards Act. For some reason, this government is going to be removing the requirement that physicians and legal expertise lawyers serve on this board. The government gave no rationale for this move.

The question outstanding to the member opposite is: What criteria will there be for future appointments to the board? Why are you removing medical expertise and legal expertise from review boards? This was brought in in 1998. When families get to this state, they are looking for support at that board to clarify infractions that are happening in the system.

Why are you watering down these boards and making them less effective, knowing the impact it will have on families and seniors?

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: The member almost answered her own question.

Again, this is an act that was drafted in 1998, and something the government is doing across government is modernizing any acts so that they're up to modernized standards and we're removing any sort of duplications.

She is well aware of how many long-term-care homes work. I imagine she goes to many of them, like I do in my community. I will tell you, when I go visit long-term-care homes in my community—I think of Roberta Place, which I think just celebrated 60 years of being functional. And certainly, they've gone through different recommendations from their board where a lot of family members—they have a whole family committee that makes recommendations on how they can best improve the services in their home. They have a medical doctor on site who also contributes. They don't need to have a formality on a board—they're already part of that whole wraparound care system that this government has set up when it comes to reforming our long-term-care sector.

Again, not in this bill, but this builds on what's in the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: We have two great projects going on in the county of Essex with respect to long-term care. I'm going to ask the minister if she would want to comment on the contents of this bill that pertain to long-term care. The first great project is happening in the town of Amherstburg—that's my hometown—adding 160 new patient spots for long-term care in the town of Amherstburg.

I invite the minister to comment.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the minister for a quick answer.

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: I think this recognizes the dignity we owe all our seniors.

I was raised by my grandparents. I took care of them at end of life, and I think we owe it to take care of everyone in their golden years.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I will be speaking about Bill 148—ironically called "protect Ontario families"—and I will explain why I think that's ironic. I will just note that this is the same government that removed speed cameras from school safety zones, much to the detriment of children and families who are trying to go to school.

Now, this bill has 18 schedules in it. Some of them I could applaud, but the fact is it's a whole grab bag of things that should be examined and debated separately. I think this is called "flooding the zone," and this is clearly the government's strategy for getting away with only sitting for 32 days last spring and what is likely to be a 34-day session this fall: Jam everything together into an omnibus bill so that the public has as little opportunity as possible to weigh in.

I note that Bill 140, which removes environmental protections and removes the public's ability to actually complain or raise issues about environmental concerns, has only got one day of sittings. It's an incredibly important bill.

But in Bill 148, what really stands out is how the government has indemnified itself against malfeasance—its own malfeasance, its own bad faith. In other words, they're protecting themselves from being sued over the effects of their own legislation, bad decisions and incompetence.

It's not the first time we've seen this. We saw this around Ontario Place, where the government brought in a special bill just to indemnify itself against what they know is a really bad deal for the people of Ontario. I believe they took down 800 trees. They're having a private company put up this luxury spa that nobody asked for and nobody wants. But it's going to have pictures of trees inside it, so hey, it's worth paying $45 a shot to go inside and see an image of a tree that you can no longer see outside the building.

1550

But my point is that they indemnify themselves because they know it's bad. It's an admission of a problem. Same thing dealing with bike lanes: Do people realize that the government has protected itself against being sued over the effects of removing bike lanes? Because they know people are going to have accidents. There will be more accidents. There will be more deaths. And somehow the government doesn't believe it ought to be responsible, to be held accountable for the decisions it makes here in this House. It's quite disturbing. I think that the removal of those bike lanes is a $48-million poke in the eye to cyclists and to the city of Toronto.

And then changing the freedom-of-information laws so that the government can hide everything that they've done going back to 1988—hide the Premier's cellphone because that's where he does all the deals that would not pass the smell test and deals he doesn't want the public to know about.

This is particularly in regard to the OSAP debacle that is causing so much harm to students and to those teaching institutions, and it is a clear admission that the government allowed massive levels of fraud to take place in the OSAP system. They've known for years, and yet they came out a month ago and cut the OSAP system and reversed the grant-to-loan ratio quite dramatically, blaming students for the abuse of the system when, in fact, it is this government and this government's incompetence—that's the nicest way to put it because we also know that the government also received a great deal of money—donations—from some of those same private career colleges.

One of the things that I see in here is also that the government has given itself the means to interfere with OSAP approvals. I'm just wondering what that is supposed to mean. The Premier had a terrific rant against students only a week ago in which he blamed students all over again for problems with the OSAP system. I'm going to say thank goodness he didn't try and do it in French.

He also expressed and he continues to express his hatred for the arts. I don't know what he thinks, when we were here and we heard that magnificent choir a week ago—how he thinks that's possible. The person directing that choir is clearly a trained professional musician, and we all love it, and yet God forbid anybody study anything in the arts.

I want to also look a little bit at what are arts disciplines: philosophy, theology, sociology, communication sciences—do you know what that is? Public relations. Do you know what they do? They cover up things. They create new narratives whenever something goes wrong—psychology, human geography, demographics, social work, history, politics, economics, law, journalism, literature, accounting, commerce, music, dance, etc.

I would like to suggest that the Premier actually do a little survey within this building of employees and find out how many have come here with an arts background. Without those skills, you don't have the capacity to analyze or look critically at the texts and materials that we're given.

Let's look a bit at the effects of the OSAP cuts and the effects on private colleges. I have received a letter from Willis College. They're trying to get a meeting. And what they say, summarized: The OSAP pause cut Willis health enrolment by 25% and blocked new cohorts. Career colleges train 86% of Ontario's personal support workers, so delayed classes worsen health care staffing shortages. Without OSAP, 87% of affected students may drop out within 60 days, while many struggle to pay for rent, groceries and child care. Most Willis students are working adults, over 30, parents or rural residents who rely on live, instructor-led online classes to retrain.

Then, unfortunately, they sent another email to say, "Unfortunately, since I sent out the meeting request, we have had to conduct a round of layoffs. As such, I will not be able to meet next week, as I have to attend to other company matters to keep the ship afloat."

So we know that it's dramatically affecting students' ability. We know that these decisions are creating vulner-

ability, creating precarity and actually creating a level of poverty amongst students who no longer have the ability to actually pursue their education and are putting it off an entire term.

It's like the government has no concept of what it means to put aside that time to get an education, to figure out how you're going to finance it, and all of a sudden, the rug is pulled out from under you, and you've got nothing. You have no idea of when it's going to be over.

I also heard from a student who is a cosmetology student. I had to look that up. That person is also not able to go on, and in fact, I think there are only two students in the entire school who need OSAP. So there is no reason; clearly, that school was not involved in the fraud.

Cosmetology—hair, makeup and grooming is basically what it is. It's people who look after us if we go to a salon. You might not realize this, but they are required to take 1,500 hours of training. I find that remarkable. It's important, because health and safety is really critical to that particular career. I like to compare those 1,500 hours to the training of commercial truck drivers, which is 103.5 hours. And we ask ourselves why we have a problem. Apart from the fact that so many drivers aren't even getting that level of training—pretty interesting, isn't it?

We have, in fact, the lowest level per capita funding for post-secondary education in the country. It's about $6,000 less per student, and yet—and we also know that public education is collapsing. It's being shredded and made unable to function, and it's all calculated and very deliberate on the part of this government and this Minister of Education.

There is a lot of smoke and mirrors going on in these conversations about education. I've heard the Minister of Education weave a narrative many times, and it always makes me think of gathering all the straw in a barn where the big bulls live, using an old-fashioned spinning wheel to turn a mess and then say, "This is gold." Do you remember that children's story about trying to—

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Rapunzel.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: —Rapunzel—to turn straw into gold? Well, bull manure may be gold as fertilizer, but it's no substitute for facts around school funding.

School funding is short over $6 billion. Now, the minister can get up and say, "We're funding education at the highest amount we've ever heard"—

Interjections.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Yes. Unfortunately, it's magic. It's fiddling. It's fiddling with numbers, because it doesn't recognize the population numbers—

Hon. Graham McGregor: That's partisan math.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Order, please.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I see partisan math on the other side of the House. It is quite remarkable. And as we know, we have a minister who is capable of spinning the straw to make it into something it is not.

He doesn't want school trustee organizations to exist, to actually support students to learn to become democratic participants in their schools. He doesn't think that money should be spent there because everything should go to the classroom, but there's $400,000 going to his hand-picked supervisors, and these supervisors won't even talk to parents. That is not money going into the classroom; that is money going into friends' pockets.

Now I want to talk a little bit about—let's talk about CAS, children's aid society. I'm going to take a step back here. I asked the minister a question yesterday about care for people with complex disabilities, and I said that there's no place for them to go. I need to clarify: I'm talking about people over the age of 18. I can tell you right now, there is no place for those people to go. There are places, but there's no program in this government to fund those spaces. I've been working with a family who have spent their entire life savings to look after their son. It's a situation that needs to be addressed by this government, and so far, it's just being pushed down the road.

1600

Children's aid society: We get this KPMG report, and this report tells us that—again, we have a Premier who loves to bluster—bluster's a kind way of putting it—about, "Oh, children's aid; they're building Taj Mahals." Doesn't that sound just like the throwing it all at students and saying everything's the fault of students? Well, everything's the fault of CAS workers; they're abusing the public purse.

So we get this report, and we have these things in the bill that tweak—they might make a couple of regulations, but they don't actually address the core issue, which is that the funding is not there. When CAS is putting people into motels, closets, sheds, knowing that there are kids living in sheds in the backyard, it's because there's nowhere else for them to go. The CAS does not have the funding to create other spaces or to support nurturing and developing foster parents who can look after some of these kids so they don't wind up staying in those places. That, to me, is the core outcome of that report, of that audit—that the resources simply are not there to meet the needs of the children.

One of the reasons that the report cites is the very high cost of housing, and that brings me to the whole issue of the lack of rent control and the fact that this government eliminated rent control on buildings older than 2018. We've seen also massive purchases of spaces and a cornering of markets by large corporate owners of rental spaces. So you have so many people unable to afford a place to live, and an agency like the CAS has to deal with the same excesses of extremely high rents for, often, very poor-quality spaces.

So, when I say it's ironic, "protecting Ontario families," it is in fact harming Ontario families. The whole cutting of OSAP supports for career college students, but also drastically reducing OSAP supports for students attending public colleges and universities, and the same thing when we are supposed to be protecting families and yet children in need have no safe place to go. The government is well aware of that, but we have these kinds of window-dressing bills and, again, a hodgepodge of bills when we should be speaking separately and in a very focused way about

children's aid and how to get that system actually working on behalf of the children it's meant to serve.

I want to look a little bit at long-term-care homes. Apparently, we're getting new enforcement officers, although bad actors are still being let off the hook. But what I'm interested in is that there's a statement that says owners need to obey the Fixing Long-Term Care Act. That long-term-care act right now is abused frequently by the abuse of the Trespass to Property Act by managers, and that forcibly isolates seniors in long-term care. It also happens in group homes. So I'm hoping that's actually what that refers to, but I would like to see it spelled out because it's not clear.

I have a couple of minutes left, and I would like to talk about what's going on at the colleges.

Confederation College in Thunder Bay is laying off 5% more of its faculty. They have actually been laying off faculty for quite a long time. There's a dismantling, I will say, of the college system. What is interesting is that there's a deskilling taking place because of the defunding. So you have programs that were very effective at training—for example, the aerospace program, which is really a generic title for the kind of skills you would take to work at a place like Alstom, where they are building transit, subway trains and streetcars. And yet, the training now is going to be microcredentials—a little bit of this, a little bit of that, a little bit of this here and there. So they can go and do a job, but they have no possibility for career advancement because they haven't received the breadth of training that was previously available and is no longer available. That is, frankly, a pretty serious crisis—when we see colleges laying off instructor after instructor, year after year.

I have a little more time than I expected, so that's good.

I want to look at tuition fees and where they were, because this bill touches on many of these areas. In 1995, when the NDP was in power, an MBA, law school, engineering—they were about $3,000 a year; college fees were half of that. The Harris Conservatives came in and jacked up tuition to $5,000, $12,000, $28,000 for an MBA, where it had been $3,000 when the NDP was in power. And then the Liberals ran on a campaign promise to freeze tuition fees, but two years later they increased those fees again, so they don't have a great record.

The government has given a pile of money to colleges and universities, but in fact they're financing that money by taking the money away from students, forcing students to have greater and greater loans, so that they will be paying the debt for years and years and years—again, it's this smoke and mirrors or bait and switch. You take the money from the students and then you give it to the colleges and universities, when they have been dramatically underfunded for at least 30 years.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'm wondering if you think the Premier should apologize. He punched down and said that OSAP was unsustainable because people are buying fancy watches. What do we expect from the leader of the province, when it's clear he was blaming them, when it was really the government's mismanagement?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you to the member from Kitchener Centre for that question.

Honestly, I find it quite disgusting when people with power, people in a position of authority punch down. And that's what we have seen repeatedly—punching down against students, punching down against workers at children's aid. It's a pattern. We often hear it directly in the House.

What people need to realize, actually, is that when we're being punched down at, that's the time to unite, get together and realize where the problem is. And that means punching up.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Hon. Graham McGregor: I want to thank the member opposite for her intervention on the bill and for her advice on long-term care.

I know that the previous Liberal government took the NDP's advice on long-term care and over 10 years were able to build about 600 long-term-care beds during their time in office. Since this government took office, we've built almost double that. Just in Brampton, in my community alone—tens and tens of thousands of new and upgraded beds built by this government, and we did that by not following the NDP's advice. Actually, the NDP voted against these measures every time we put it forward to build these tens and tens and tens of thousands of net new and upgraded beds.

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I'm just wondering why the member thinks the government should be taking the NDP's advice on long-term care given their disastrous record—not even to get into Bob Rae, by the way, in 1995—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Thunder Bay–Superior North.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: It's a pity that—well, there are a number of things to respond to there. First of all, because of what you've done to OSAP and to colleges, there's no way you're going to have four hours of care—the PSWs do not exist. One.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Through the Speaker, please.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you. Through the Speaker: Secondly, the member ought to realize, through you, Speaker, that many seniors and organized seniors actually don't want all the investment going into long-term care, particularly for-profit long-term care. They want to see housing for seniors that's affordable, residences with support but that are fully affordable. And you know what? The member from Kenora had funded just such a place in Kenora. We'd like to see that across the whole province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: *Remarks in Anishininiimowin. This report will be republished to add the transcribed remarks once available.*

It's always an honour to be able to get up and speak my language, but one of these days I might actually speak French.

Meegwetch to the member from Thunder Bay–Superior North. I know one of the things this bill talks about is protecting Ontario families and communities. This past summer, specifically July 14, 2026, there were two communities that burned down: Collins, Whitewater, and there are other—I know the member will know for sure.

When we talk about protecting Ontario families and communities, can you explain some of the camps, the resorts that burnt down, the number of them, and share that story?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you to the member from Kiiwetinoong for the question. Clearwater Lake, which is south of Armstrong: 18 out of 20 homes were burnt to the ground. There are businesses that are there—Wabakimi, owned by Bruce Hyer, about $4 million invested, but they only have insurance for about $1.5 million. So many pieces of their place were burnt to the ground.

The reality is that the MNR wasn't there, the government wasn't there—the government didn't even show up until a week later, and when they did show up, they didn't talk to anybody; it was just a publicity stunt.

So, no, they were not there to look after the people of northwestern Ontario and people who are still trying to recover from the tragedy of what happened this summer.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions? I recognize the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Interjection.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thanks, Speaker. Despite the objections of the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism, I do have a question for the member opposite. Thank you so much for your remarks.

The bill has changes that are proposed that will enable nurse practitioners to fully utilize their extensive education, clinical expertise and broad scope of practice by serving in the clinical director role in a long-term-care home.

I'm wondering if the member opposite is in favour of that being part of the bill, which will ideally maximize the existing health human resources capacity that we have while we continue to support continued access to high-quality care for residents.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you to the member for the question. As a matter of fact, yes, we do support that very strongly; the request has come from nurse practitioners.

What you may not realize is that it was the NDP that brought in nurse practitioner-led clinics and did that investment and did a lot to build up—we have a very strong relationship with nurse practitioners. Frankly, the funding model needs to change for family health teams, because we have nurse practitioners in those teams who get scooped by hospitals that can pay so much more when, in fact, we need to have pay equity no matter where you are working in the health care system.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I just wonder if you would like to comment on the KPMG report that talks about how our child welfare system is relying heavily on private, for-profit placements for kids—it's disproportionate—where kin caregivers get $71 a day, we're paying, on average, $453 a day. Do you think foster placements should be private and an opportunity for excess profit-making?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you very much. That's an important question.

Looking after children is not a place for shareholder profits. That's not what the money should be for—

M^me^ France Gélinas: Or seniors.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Same thing for seniors.

Also, you look at kin supports—and I've seen this, and I've seen it in my own extended family—the money doesn't keep up with the expense of looking after a child. It should, in fact, be the opposite. There should be more support for kinship relationships and supports where possible for children and not these private, for-profit places that all too often have abuse built into them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

I've got to go to the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Thank you, Speaker—truly an inspired choice by you, Speaker, if I should say.

I appreciate the member's answer to the question earlier, where she mentioned the 600 beds that were built by the Liberals on the advice of the NDP who, of course, voted with them 97% of the time. They didn't build more long-term-care homes because seniors don't want investments in long-term-care homes—I heard that from the member opposite. I disagree with that.

But I also heard the member talk about the NDP government and their accomplishments. In Ontario today, seniors receive, on average, four hours of care in a long-term-care home setting because of the investments that this government and this Premier have made.

I'm wondering if they could share, how many hours of care did seniors receive when the NDP were last in power, Speaker?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I think the member is weaving with straw again. Over 300 homes do not meet that standard of four hours of care, and again, this government is undermining the ability to create the staff to actually provide that level of care—was there something else in there? I can't remember.

You know what else is important to add? How many of those homes had disasters in them during COVID? Those places were not punished in any way; they were rewarded with extended 30-year contracts with nothing changing. That is a shame and an outrage.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I will move to further debate.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: It's always a pleasure to rise in this House on behalf of my fabulous and fantastic residents of beautiful Beaches–East York.

Here we go again, speaking on a colossal omnibus bill: 18 schedules versus the 23 from last week—how many pages, 57 or so, versus the 222 from last week—with topics such as speech-language pathology to child, youth and family services; dentistry; long-term care; civil court proceedings; colleges, career colleges and universities;

personal health information; social work and more. Where is the through line? Where's the connection there?

Omnibus bills pose so many problems. It's no wonder this government loves to use them. They are actually an affront on democracy. Democracy is supposed to guarantee that power rests with the people who yield it directly or, in our case, through us, their elected representatives. But how is anyone to make an informed decision when they cannot even uncover what the bill is about because we never get any time to fully discuss, debate, consult Ontarians on the bills—

Interjection.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes, I can read, over there, thank you. I hope you can.

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Bill 148 is officially titled An Act to enact the Intimate Images Protection Act. That is the title of the bill. It would be reasonable to say that if anyone were to read that title, they would assume that this would be legislation that specifically addresses this category of civil court litigation. But that's confusing because the bill was tabled by the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services and not the Attorney General. Casually, the act is dubbed Protect Ontario Families and Communities Act, which makes a little more sense with the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services as its sponsor. So Ontarians may reasonably expect that this bill is about improving ODSP, OAP, OW, which are all in desperate need of government funding, and we hear it time and time again from our residents and the rest of Ontario.

I want to be clear: The amendments in this bill for child welfare and community health are extremely important. What I want is for this government to go further. We need a whole bill dedicated to comprehensive improvements to social services, not bits and pieces here and there.

Social assistance recipients report delays in their funding, denial of funding because eligibility fails to reflect the lived experience of people with disabilities, caseworkers are spread too thinly and, importantly, funds are simply not enough to pay for basic survival needs of shelter, groceries and utilities.

Some 22.5% of individuals from the GTA aged 15 and older have one or more disabilities that negatively impacts them in their daily lives—22.5%. Resources needed to alleviate barriers for people with disabilities burden these individuals with a cost of 39% more than someone without disabilities.

As of the summer of this year, 71,263 of the 91,974 children registered with the Ontario Autism Program lacked a core funding agreement. The current wait time for care services is averaged at more than five years—five years, for a wait time. This means children and youth are missing out on behavioural analysis, speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, mental health services, therapy equipment and assistive technology.

Without these services, youth and their families suffer. They are excluded from full classroom participation, meaning they fall behind not just in their studies but in their interpersonal relationships. And it's not just those with autism that are affected by this ridiculous wait-list; their whole support system suffers, especially their families.

Respite services are largely unavailable and, as a result, 44% of children and youth with autism live in a household where at least one caregiver is unable to work. These families cannot afford lost income when they are already struggling to pay out of pocket because the province has not provided the services they need.

It is crucial to recognize that this government's failure to effectively support people living with disabilities does not operate in a silo. It has rippling effects. A growing lack of affordability in our province means that people on social assistance are not just restricted in their access to treatment, but they are limited in their ability to find housing, food and job security. Some 85,000 Ontarians are homeless, while the average wait time for a subsidized one-bedroom to address homelessness is up to 12 years around the province.

The inadequacy of our social assistance programs is underscored by the fact that the number of Ontarians experiencing homelessness who are on OW and ODSP has shot up to 72%. There were 4.1 million food bank visits, just in Toronto, in 2026, with one in eight being children. Think about that. What are we doing in our province?

This is merely a snapshot of the countless ways that Ontarians are struggling.

So you would think that a bill coming out of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services would be a chance for the minister to jump at the opportunity to tackle the mountain of issues that Ontarians face on a daily basis. Instead, this government has chosen to split the focus of the bill that could have really delivered the security and stability that Ontarians needed.

The additional schedules in this bill deserve their own discussion. Optometry, dentistry and long-term care are all pivotal services in our province that earn their own debate and committee discussions, where attention can be devoted to them and solely them.

If we focused on the Ontario Autism Program alone, this bill could have made massive strides toward a more inclusive and equitable province. If this government spent a fraction of the money wasted on self-promotional advertisements, court hearings and bike lane removals, they could have significant progress on the autism wait-list.

Parents and professionals have been sounding the alarm bell for years. I cannot tell you how many families have come into my office frustrated and defeated that this system is not working the way it is supposed to, and that the province's promises have been broken, and, most importantly, that their children are not getting the help they need.

This month, a parent told us about their child who has been waiting on the list for four years, and they cannot afford the thousands that it would take to afford private therapy. Another community member has taken to organizing long-distance walks to city halls around our province to raise awareness for autism.

And I am sure that the OPSEU strike at Surrey Place this past summer is top of mind for all of us. Many of you

would have had the OPSEU workers come to your office to meet with you, and we know Surrey Place provides critical services to children, adults and families across Toronto, including people with developmental disabilities, autism, complex mental health and behavioural needs, and other significant support needs.

Many of the individuals that they serve rely on consistent access to specialized clinical, developmental and community-based supports. For some, these services are not optional; they are essential to their safety, stability, independence and quality of life.

The glaring thing about these events is that while the government was wrapped up in denying these essential workers the wages they were owed for 14 weeks, their clients were suffering. We've had professionals recount to us heartbreaking stories where, in the span of these weeks, clients regressed, unable to receive services because this government refused to enable workers to do their jobs. Clients fell back into old patterns, and these workers were picking up the pieces. Even after all this, the wait-list backlog remains.

What this government does not seem to understand is that it's all about the cost of inaction. I have spoken about that at length as it relates to the environment, but these costs are applicable everywhere. When we fail to provide effective support for autism, child welfare, and adequate ODSP and OW funding in the form of timely intervention, Ontarians suffer.

Each individual has unique needs when it comes to autism, and research reports that support may cost $26,639 to $130,000 per individual on a yearly basis. And when government funding falls short, families are estimated to spend $40,000 out of pocket to access treatment. Best-case scenario, you can afford this, but you end up in debt, as most people do not have funds of this amount that are disposable. Worst-case scenario, you cannot afford this out of pocket, and your child goes without support for years. Now this brings us into adulthood, when it is infinitely harder to access resources.

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When we do not provide Ontarians with the support that they need, it is substantially more costly. Without opportunities for strong and stable employment, mental, physical and emotional services, and housing security, as is often the reality for people living with disabilities, people are forced to seek care the only way they know how: through our hospitals. In fact, merely not housing people is estimated to incur $12,209 in public health care costs compared to just $1,769 for those with stable access to housing.

This is supposed to be a fiscally conservative, fiscally responsible government. Finding cost savings where and when you can should be music to your ears. Obviously, you're tone-deaf. If you're looking for ways to close this deficit, here you go. When you invest in people in the long term, you ensure long-term and sustainable benefits. So I'm disappointed that even when given the opportunity to take bold action to alleviate wait-lists and guarantee families a social safety net when they need it most, they have instead opted for games. That is what an omnibus bill is. It is a political game. There is such a wide range of topics in here, some that we on this side of the House have been pushing for real change on, but this government weaves in seriously disturbing amendments that would detrimentally impact countless Ontarians and presents it as if we are all against positive change.

Notably, this bill, Bill 148, forwards the government's project of dismantling the OSAP framework in Ontario.

Let's not forget, earlier this year, when this government slashed OSAP, reducing the grants available from 85% to 25%. This dashed aside the dreams of high school students whose enrolment in their first year of university and college would only be made possible by OSAP grants, as well as current post-secondary students whose remaining education depended on receiving OSAP. When confronted with the tragic consequences of their reckless decisions, this government doubled down. The Premier himself trivialized the burden of loans. He demonstrated that he is completely out of touch with reality. It is not as simple as getting a job and working. Students are entering into a workforce where youth unemployment is at an all-time high—over 17% in 2025. Rent and grocery prices are increasingly unaffordable. In Toronto, half of food bank clients spend 100% of their income on housing, while grocery prices are soaring. Canadians spend over 10% of their disposable income on groceries. And to make matters worse, this government rejected our motion to create a youth career fund that would have created 47,000 to 75,000 jobs. What were you thinking?

The Premier then blamed students for these cuts, suggesting that only certain courses, certain talents and certain people are worthy of government support. We all remember the infamous basket-weaving comment. The Premier went on to note, "Taxpayers want to know that the courses students are picking—and that they're paying for—are going to help an in-demand job sector in the province," again demonstrating how blissfully unaware this government is of the costs facing everyday Ontarians.

Omar Nusir, a second-year student at Western University studying medical sciences, pointed out the irony of this sentiment. Nusir said, "In-demand fields are higher in cost." When he looked at tuition fees at Western for medical school, tuition was more than $20,000 a year. So if he listened to the Premier's advice about choosing in-demand fields, he would actually go further into debt.

Restricting access to post-secondary education based on socio-economic status does one thing only: It widens the divide—unemployment worsens, poverty grows, the housing crisis continues.

When we invest in youth from a young age and through post-secondary, we enable future successes, equipping them with tools to buy homes, open businesses and confidently contribute their unique skills and expertise to their chosen sector.

When this Premier says "Protect Ontario," he only means the people in Ontario that can afford the homes this government chooses to develop, the spas that they build, the cars that they would prefer populate our roads. But we know that this is not the majority of Ontarians. These cuts

to OSAP were a nail in a coffin to the livelihood and success of Ontario's youth, and this bill just finishes the job.

After they dealt with public universities and colleges, the government moved on to private career colleges. Just a month ago, this government announced that they would be withholding OSAP from all private career colleges province-wide, because of a problem they knew about for years but refused to address until it was too late. I'll talk about my fabulous college, Marca College, which I know you heard in my member statement the other day, later.

Schedules 13 and 14 shield this government from lawsuits related to neglect, financial damages and default due to the pause in OSAP for private career college students all over Ontario. This is so ludicrous. I can't even fathom it. If you actually believed in what you're doing, there would be no need to cover your butts, but obviously you do not. Additionally, schedule 13 allows the minister to suspend an institution's OSAP approval for reasons provided in the regulation, not just breaching any condition of the agreement.

I'm going to skip over a bit because, obviously, I'm running out of time; I could speak for hours on this.

This omnibus bill and all others like it obstruct important issues. They pull our attention in all different directions, which is intentional by this government. A bill whose amendments relate to one another and support one another promotes fulsome evaluation and discussion of the bill. That's the way it should be. It permits the bill to be improved, because we can actually get around to consulting Ontarians and incorporating their feedback. I know this government will spin it to make it seem as if we're all against positive changes, but we're not; we want these ideas divided up and no more omnibus bill games.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: The Minister of Colleges and Universities had his own business. Why do you think he might have been able to do a better job of preventing massive theft and loss and fraud, but he's not able to do that in his current role?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I will remind the members to address the Speaker, not the individual members.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes, it is true: The Minister of Colleges and Universities has had a successful business—a tasty and successful business—so he should know full well how to balance the books and do things transparently and openly and fairly. I wish that we would actually just hear from him directly, from his heart, about OSAP, instead of the repeated game of using the same verbiage over again: "guardrails"; "bad actors." What was the other one? I'm going to forget. Oh, "serious allegations."

Just solve the problem and do it now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Hon. Graham McGregor: I've got a quick question for the marvellous member for brilliant Beaches–East York. The member talked about things that she would be supporting in this bill. I'm wondering if they could outline what some of those good things are that they think are worth keeping in the bill.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Obviously the part pertaining to nurse practitioners—I'll use that as an example. I think that is a good idea. Full disclosure: I do have a sister-in-law who's a nurse practitioner. She's been at SickKids for years and does a great job. I feel that that is one way of helping to alleviate and address our health care crisis.

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I would love it if that were a stand-alone or it was in another bill specifically with health care and addressing the health care crisis. Instead, it is in this crazy omnibus bill with 10 million different ideas that don't go together that you've just rammed together to confuse Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I could summarize this bill by saying it's a dog's breakfast of a bill. I mean, you've thrown everything in this. It's flooding the zone, a distraction away from a scandal-ridden government.

I want to ask the member from Beaches–East York specifically, though, around the OSAP schedules, around career colleges. What does it say about a government and a minister who, instead of addressing the core issues with career colleges and their own scandal, their own incompetence, have buried in this piece of legislation indemnification clauses to protect the government retroactively? What does that say about where they are right now and how they have really turned their backs on the very people we're elected to serve?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you very much to the good member from Waterloo. Great question.

I don't understand this government, and maybe it's because they think that youth aren't voting. Well, they're voting. They're not only voting—and I would encourage the youth to vote, run for office, mobilize as you're doing, stand up, rally, protest, petition and work together. Youth, if they mobilize, they could unseat a government. They have a chance right not because of the way this government is treating them and their futures.

What they're doing with OSAP is inhumane, unbelievable. They are destroying their futures intentionally.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: On that same topic, to the member from Beaches–East York: How exactly are these OSAP cuts impacting people in her riding?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you very much to the fine member from Kanata–Carleton, whom I have the utmost respect for.

I have a college in beautiful Beaches–East York. You were probably hanging on my every word when I bragged about them yesterday, a private career college, Marca College of Hair and Esthetics. It's been running for 41 years on the Danforth. It is an anchor tenant in the Danforth Village BIA. And 350 students from all over Ontario, probably your ridings, are coming to beautiful Beaches–East York to study, to learn, to become great,

talented tradespeople. They just had the rug pulled out right from underneath them. Thankfully, Marca College is that forward-thinking and benevolent that they are going to cover the costs for now, but they cannot continue it. That's why this government needs to reverse their ungodly OSAP manoeuvres.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: To the member: One of the first things that this government did was eliminate the position of the child and youth advocate, which was shocking, really, because he did such important work. It is such important work that needs to be done. But one of the things he said about this bill is the system is on fire and the government is bringing a water pistol to put the fire out. Would you like to comment on that?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I like that; they're bringing a water pistol to put the fire out. That is a great line, and it's absolutely accurate.

I love the Irish saying, "Start as you mean to go on," and I feel that this government just set the tone by doing that manoeuvre, as they did by basically killing the Ontario environment commissioner as well.

But it just sends a message to youth. First of all, what they're doing to education, schools, how they're starving our classrooms. They're not building schools. They're not addressing the autism wait-list. They are denying youth their future, and they just seem not to care about any young people in Ontario. It's a travesty.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Hon. Graham McGregor: I heard the member talk a lot about university students and the need to support them. This is the government that took the brave step in 2018 of freezing tuition for students across Ontario—recently removed that freeze with very modest increases of 2% per year.

As somebody who cares about the students, like I know the member opposite does, could they just tell us, when the Liberal government was in power, what was the average yearly increase of tuition? And what would be the yearly increase in tuition under a new Liberal government if they ever formed power again?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Well, my time here at Queen's Park started when you did, in 2022. So I am responsible and I hold myself responsible for anything that happened from that time onward. But as you know, we are having a leadership race, which I know you're all going to be paying attention to. Maybe some of you will be peeking in, coming to our event to find out. And we will start as we mean to go on.

Liberals previously prided themselves on a great education system in Ontario, and we certainly will be reversing the destruction, what you're doing to OSAP from the get-go—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

I recognize the member from London West for a quick question.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I wonder if the member can comment on the title of the bill, protecting Ontario families and communities.

Given what is in schedules 13 and 14 to indemnify the government against any legal action against them as a result of the private career college scandal, do you think that this bill should be called "protecting the Conservatives" rather than "protecting communities"?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: How do you say you're guilty without saying you're guilty? That's what I would say.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I'll move to further debate.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: It's an honour to rise and represent the people of Kitchener Centre.

I always like to start off by recognizing good things in the bill. I appreciate that the legislation protects folks who are attacked by changing of intimate images and holding folks accountable for harm done around sexualized images—also, addressing workplace mobility and, as a social worker, addressing any harm done in the role as a social worker.

I'm going to focus on ODSP and child welfare. I was approached by Emmanuel college, a private college in my riding where half of their students can't pay. Now, imagine you're a business and half of your paying customers cannot pay their bills. We see colleges fundraising, looking for charitable donations just to keep their lights on and to keep students learning. It's unfair, and you've done a lot of harm to a lot of people, a lot of small and medium businesses, a lot of students who have quit their jobs. It's egregious, and I think you owe students in this province an apology for blaming them and then abandoning them.

You've made it easier to evict people. If someone's late on their rent by seven days, they can face eviction. Yet here you go, where people have quit their jobs and they're relying on OSAP funding. They've been promised that money, and you've abandoned them and not provided that money, and now they can't pay their rent. This is what we're hearing in our ridings.

Again, we see this government causing a great deal of harm and then passing legislation that goes back to when they screwed up to keep them out of trouble. This is a total lack of accountability. We say "tough on crime"? Well, this government just changes the rule of what a crime is to keep themselves out of trouble, and that is not tough on crime. This is not justice; it is a shame.

And how dare you punch down on young people? Young people are facing the highest rent, the lack of opportunity, highest unemployment, and now not only are they having to pay more, and they're having the government change the equation so they're getting more loans instead of grants, but I'm hearing from students that even the amount of money they get in OSAP is less, and more and more students are going to food banks. I heard from the student groups that were here this week there was a doubling at Laurier of students accessing food banks in one year. This is a direct result of the cuts to the amount of OSAP they're receiving, let alone the stress and anxiety when they leave school.

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If you're really going to do some repair, you should take their advice, stop the interest charges for the first few years and give them a two-year grace period for repayment so that kids, young people, have a fighting chance when they graduate to pay back their bills and start a bright future without feeling a sense of dread.

I'm also wondering if this bill will have any teeth. You talk about all this accountability to private colleges, but I know when it comes to wage theft, there are no people to get any of that money back. So I'm worried that you actually can't follow through on holding these bad actors accountable.

When it comes to child welfare, we have seen how much money is going to private, for-profit providers. This is another example of how we break it and we end up using private companies to try to fix it. And guess what? It costs more and we get less.

As a social worker, I can tell you, the needs have not gone down. You talk about 31% less kids in care, 31% less clients—or 11% less in care, 31%—it's because they don't have money to accept referrals. I was making referrals for a family who was not addressing the mental health and medical needs of kids, and I was getting a child welfare system that could not respond.

We are not giving any money for prevention. This is the cheapest, best way to address the issues that families are facing, and they get zero dollars for that. Instead, we give buckets of money—$453 per day as compared to $71 for kin care. Talk to someone providing kin care these days. Guess what they say? They feel abandoned by this government. They're given almost nothing in terms of support, legal help to navigate this, trust in their voices as they defend their kids, support to pay for housing. These are seniors, often grandparents, who are doing a service by taking their grandkids into their home, and they are not being treated with respect, and they are not given the financial support. And we wonder why we don't have foster parents? We're not even treating kin care members well.

I have to give a shout-out to Camino and the kin caregiver group. They have created a response, a peer support group, where they are trying to figure it out with love and duct tape, because this government does not give them the help that they need.

We have to look at the ways in which we are treating complex mental health and complex disability. I can tell you story after story after story of how we have diluted mental health care to be a McDonald's; where we are doing brief support, solution-focused support, and for people with complex trauma, attachment issues, complex mental health and disabilities, those services do not exist.

So not only do families have a hard time paying for a roof and food and that's why they end up in child welfare services, but the way we serve people in the public, not-for-profit sector—it's not there. It's all moved to the private sector. So child welfare organizations end up spending millions of dollars trying to get proper care for kids with complex needs because we've totally starved, closed and abandoned those complex supports that used to exist in communities they don't exist in anymore.

Let's invest in housing for families. Let's invest in the not-for-profit sector so that they can treat complex mental health, complex disabilities. And let's invest in families that are going to bat for those kids and fix the child welfare system today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Hon. Graham McGregor: I want to thank the member opposite for their intervention on the bill, for their speech about the bill.

I know the member wants to fund more services, and one of the ways the Green Party wants to do this is through a wealth tax—not something I agree with, but it's a position I respect. It's a position also held only by the Green Party, not by the New Democrats and not by the Liberals. The Green Party are alone in this view.

I just wonder what the member opposite's message would be to some of those New Democrats that are in the House today, Liberals that are in the House today, that don't support the wealth tax that the Green Party is proposing. What are the arguments that they would make to maybe get those people onside?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Well, if you're looking at somebody with a big credit card bill, do you tell them to quit their job and get rid of sources of revenue?

And I think there are gross inequities—Galen Weston's income with a one-time 5% tax on people with over $100 million. People with over $100 million pay less in taxes percentage-wise than wages. We are not taxing wealth to the same degree as taxing wages. Galen Weston's net worth would go from $22.7 billion to $22.48 billion. I think he's doing fine. And that would get rid of the deficit and would help to fund our child welfare system.

So I think people with over $100 million could pay more of their fair share. They're going to tell you, "Oh, we're just going to leave to go somewhere else." That has not been proven worldwide. This has been done in other jurisdictions; it's been very successful. And it would help you balance the books because you can't seem to pay your credit card bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The member from Kitchener Centre and I share a large portion of our riding. We have so many career colleges in that area, and we've heard some pretty heartbreaking stories where people's dreams are completely shattered. And what do we have here in this bill? We have a government that is shamelessly just protecting themselves for the scandal that they created, casting aside those aspirations of youth.

In particular, I'm thinking of personal support workers. A majority of personal support workers come out of the career colleges system. We're desperate for PSWs across Ontario. Homes in K-W can't hire them fast enough, and yet this government does nothing to assure that those PSWs will actually achieve their goals. And 300 long-term-care homes didn't even meet their minimum standards. How are we going to meet minimum standards without PSWs in Ontario?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I think if you ask even our chamber of commerce, they'll tell you that we need to be investing in our public colleges and public universities and we need to be supporting these good actors in the private sector because we see that they create value in our community.

We're looking at a human resources disaster. There's what's called the silver tsunami of our baby boomers needing more and more care over the next few years. We have to be looking at the ways in which we're causing a great deal of harm by jeopardizing the skilled training that happens in these private colleges and how we've done a grave disservice to people who quit their job, put their whole futures on the line and now have been left with nothing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Beaches–East York.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you very much to the fabulously passionate member from Kitchener Centre. I always love listening to you, and I learn so much.

You have a background—you were a social worker; you were also a city councillor—and so you know a lot. You know a lot about helping people. If you had your druthers, what would you put in this bill? What should be in this bill if we really wanted to help youth?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I would be looking at the ways in which those families need help. They need help taking care of their kids, who have faced parents who can't parent them for whatever reason. Giving them the tools that they need, the financial support, the legal tools to have some custody and decision-making—there are lots of ways in which we could restructure child welfare and properly fund it.

We need to have standards. We need to keep the addresses in so we can hold this government accountable. They got rid of knowing where these services are provided, so they can't put a motel address on the books anymore.

I think we need to recognize the gaps that we have in providing safe homes for kids and make sure that we're investing in prevention so that we can keep kids housed and safe and give those caregivers the help that they need.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I move to further debate.

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: I am pleased to rise this afternoon to speak to the Protect Ontario Families and Communities Act. It is always a privilege to stand in this chamber and speak to the great work our government is doing, and I'm pleased to be sharing my time today with the member for Whitby.

As the Minister of Long-Term Care, I am especially proud of the track record our government has in strengthening the sector and protecting Ontario's seniors and long-term-care residents. We know that Ontario's seniors have spent their lives building our communities; raising families; and helping make Ontario the best place to live, thrive and grow. They are our parents, our grandparents, our friends and our neighbours. When the time comes for them to make the decision to enter long-term care, I want to ensure that they know their dignity, safety and well-being always comes first.

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Speaker, that is why this government has made historic investments to build more long-term-care homes, hire more staff and improve the quality of care that long-term-care residents can count on. This includes our $6.4-billion investment to build 58,000 new and redeveloped long-term-care spaces or homes across the province.

Cela comprend notre investissement de 6,4 milliards de dollars visant à créer 58 000 places nouvelles et réaménagées en soins de longue durée, ou de nouveaux foyers, partout dans la province.

This also includes our $4.9-billion investment to hire and retain 27,000 long-term-care staff—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I'm sorry to interrupt the minister, but pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

To the government House leader.

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, I want to hear the minister. Please continue the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I turn back to the minister.

L'hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Merci beaucoup.

Cela comprend notre investissement de 4,9 milliards de dollars pour embaucher et garder 27 000 employés dans les soins de longue durée, ainsi qu'un financement annuel continu de près de 2 milliards de dollars pour augmenter le nombre d'infirmières, de préposés aux services de soutien à la personne et de professionnels paramédicaux dans les foyers de soins de longue durée.

Speaker, in 2021, we passed the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, which enshrined in legislation our government's commitment to providing an average of four hours of care to residents in long-term care. I am so proud to say that as of this year, we have surpassed this ambitious target and have achieved an average of four hours of care to Ontario's long-term-care residents across the province for four consecutive quarters. We continue to exceed the 36-minute target of care from allied health professionals.

But as we all know, there is more that goes into strengthening long-term care than just building the capacity and hiring more staff. It means ensuring we have the programs in place so that these homes can operate effectively. That is exactly what we're doing this afternoon.

The first item is how we are supporting sustainable medical leadership in long-term-care homes. Under the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, all long-term-care homes are required to have a medical director. The role of a medical director is to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate the organization of medical services within the home. It is also to review and approve clinical policies and procedures to ensure high standards of resident care are continuously being met; to collaborate and consult with the

director of care and other health care professionals in the home; oversee and communicate expectations to attending physicians and nurse practitioners; and address issues related to resident care, after-hours coverage and on-call medical arrangements. Thus far, this position could only be filled by a physician.

Dans ce projet de loi, notre gouvernement propose un changement qui permettrait aux infirmières praticiennes et infirmiers praticiens de mettre pleinement à profit leur vaste formation, leur expertise clinique et leur large champ d'expérience en assumant ce rôle.

We are also proposing to change the title from "medical director" to "clinical director" to better represent the responsibilities of the role.

We recognize that homes can face challenges filling these crucial roles, so we are working to ensure homes have the needed flexibility to maintain strong clinical leadership.

As a registered nurse, I am very familiar with the skills and expertise that nurse practitioners bring to the health care sector. Their training and advanced education provides them with the qualities needed to deliver vital, life-saving care to patients in hospitals and residents in long-term care. This combination enables them to develop and implement care plans while, at the same time, mentoring other support staff like practical nurses and PSWs. This change would maximize existing health human resource capacity in the sector, enabling physicians to focus on more acute and complex clinical responsibilities while supporting continued access to high-quality care for residents.

The next change that this bill proposes that I would like to speak to is one that is very near to my heart. We know that close to 60%—I think it's actually close to 70%—of residents living in long-term-care homes in Ontario have a dementia diagnosis.

L'automne dernier, j'ai eu le plaisir d'annoncer un investissement de 9 millions de dollars de notre gouvernement pour lancer un nouveau programme visant à améliorer les soins liés à la démence dans les foyers de soins de longue durée de l'Ontario.

The Improving Dementia Care Program helps care homes implement emotion-based models of care, which improve the well-being of residents with dementia by prioritizing their needs and fostering closer relationships amongst staff, residents and families. They are person-centred, guided by individual interests and lived experiences. They have shown a reduction in responsive behaviours and the use of psychotropic drugs while also reducing staff burnout and supporting staff retention. They have demonstrated positive impacts on resident quality of life, increased resident and family satisfaction and overall improvements in dementia-related outcomes.

In February, I announced the first 17 homes participating, and just last month, I was in Sudbury to announce the second group of 13 homes selected to participate in this program. In just a few short months, we have already seen the tremendous impact these programs have had. This is why I am so proud that this bill, if passed, will require every long-term-care home to offer an organized program of dementia care and services to better meet the needs of residents.

Cela permettra aux résidents d'avoir un accès uniforme et équitable aux soins liés à la démence, peu importe l'endroit où ils vivent en Ontario.

The truth is, Speaker, every single person in this room or watching this debate at home—hi, Mom—either has a loved one with dementia or knows someone who does. A dementia diagnosis does not impact just the individual; it impacts the family and the community at large, friends and family. Simply put, it impacts us all.

This proposed amendment would build upon other dementia supports, such as Behavioural Supports Ontario services. This annual $95-million investment within long-term care provides person-centred, evidence-informed supports and services for older adults who have or are at risk of responsive behaviours associated with dementia, among other neurological conditions.

Speaker, I have toured countless long-term-care homes around the province, and I have seen first-hand some of the dementia care programs already employed by our staff. I can tell you the creativity and the innovation and the different changes that our long-term-care operators are bringing in the space are truly, truly inspiring.

At one home I visited, they used the butterfly model, which many of you have heard of. The butterfly model takes a person-centred, emotion-focused approach to caring for an individual. Basically, we are using colours and creating experiences from a resident's life to help make their long-term-care home feel more like the home they spent their life in.

If any of you have a chance to tour a butterfly wing or a butterfly model, it'll look very different. A lot of our long-term-care homes are full of beige and grey and white, but the butterfly unit will be full of colours, of different paintings and different activities that residents can just do as they walk through the home.

We can design every door in a resident's room to trigger a memory. If a person was a firefighter, we can paint the room to look like a fire station. Because seniors living with dementia, if they live in a home that does not respond to these needs, they can wander. They could get lost. They might not know which room is theirs. But these specialized experiences that trigger positive memories help them recognize their home and really humanizes the care these residents receive at a time when empathy and compassion are needed the most.

Monsieur le Président, je suis extrêmement fière de tout le travail accompli par notre gouvernement et par mon équipe au ministère des Soins de longue durée pour renforcer le système de soins de longue durée en Ontario.

This bill is another crucial step in helping keep Ontario as a world leader in the sector, and I hope that we can count on the support of the entire chamber to make these meaningful changes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: With this legislation, our government would prevent, detect and respond to irregularities at private, post-secondary institutions to protect students and taxpayers. This follows two years of inspections and investigation, and our decision to bring in a third-party auditor to get to the bottom of these allegations of serious misuse and abuse of OSAP. Now, during this time, we've made the decision to pause OSAP for students at private post-secondary institutions to protect taxpayer dollars while this work continues.

1710

Speaker, I've heard from hard-working students who are trying to build a better future for themselves and their families, and I understand how frustrating it is for them to be caught up in this situation because of bad actors who have taken advantage of the OSAP system. At the same time, we have a responsibility to protect public dollars from those who may be taking advantage of the OSAP system.

We're here today with a plan to restore OSAP integrity and strengthen oversight and enforcement at private post-secondary institutions. Speaker, students deserve access to an education that prepares them for rewarding careers and better opportunities, and taxpayers deserve to know their money is being used as intended.

If this legislation is passed and regulations are made, we would act on two fronts. We would put stronger guardrails on OSAP and make sure that our government has the enforcement powers it needs to have enhanced oversight over the private post-secondary sector. Let me explain what those proposed measures would look like in practice.

First, this legislation would restore OSAP integrity at private post-secondary institutions. We would have stronger tools to address financial irregularities and recover misused OSAP funding from institutions. This legislation also includes stronger approval and performance requirements for institutions seeking OSAP eligibility. We would also require stronger student identity verification, so institutions would need to demonstrate that students are attending class and completing their own coursework. We would also introduce automatic irregularity thresholds that would trigger an audit so we can intervene sooner.

This legislation also includes caps on OSAP-funded enrolment at private institutions and restrictions on which programs are OSAP eligible, paying particular attention to online programs. Together, these measures would ensure that every OSAP dollar is used as intended to support students pursuing an education.

The second part of the proposed legislation is about strengthening oversight and enforcement powers at private institutions. Specifically, this bill would allow us to impose stricter rules around relationships between career colleges and third-party organizations such as immigration and recruitment firms, which we fear are not acting in the best interests of Ontario. This would include requiring private institutions to disclose these arrangements and introducing monetary penalties for misrepresentation.

The Superintendent of Career Colleges would also be able to impose conditions on a program at any time, enabling faster intervention to protect students. We would also require private institutions to have a brick-and-mortar locations that students can visit and regulators can inspect.

Another important element is that we would require private institutions to publish student complaint procedures on their website and on campus—all of this, Speaker, to ensure accountability to the students.

Finally, we would require career colleges to maintain a higher financial security so that in the event of a sudden career college closure, students' investments in their education are better protected.

To the taxpayers of Ontario who are outraged that there are private institutions allegedly abusing the OSAP system: We share your outrage, and we will hold these malicious actors accountable for their actions.

To the students facing financial difficulties because of this situation: I want to assure you that our government is working urgently to get good actors like yourselves back into the system.

Speaker, this legislation is an important step toward restoring confidence in the private post-secondary system. Students deserve to know that the education they're working hard for will prepare them for rewarding careers. And taxpayers deserve confidence that every OSAP dollar is being used as intended. Our government is taking action to protect that trust and hold those who take advantage of the system accountable. If passed, this legislation would give our government stronger tools to prevent misuse, act sooner when concerns arise, and hold institutions accountable when they break the rules. It would also strengthen protections for students and increase oversight of the private post-secondary sector.

We'll continue working to restore access to OSAP for hard-working students and responsible institutions. This is what students deserve and what taxpayers expect from their government.

I urge all members of this House to support this legislation.

Thank you for your attention to this presentation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I have a question for the Minister of Long-Term Care, and this question has to do with the medical director at long-term-care homes, soon to be called by a different name: the clinical director.

As the minister knows, we have two great projects going on in the riding of Essex; one is in Belle River, and the other is in the town of Amherstburg, my hometown. These two projects, together, will have 320 new spots for people in long-term care to have a home. I think that's really great.

With respect to the medical director, that title is going to change to clinical director. I would ask the minister if she would please stand and explain to the residents of Belle River and the residents of Amherstburg who are going to be occupying these two state-of-the-art homes, what does the clinical director role entail and why is that in this bill?

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Thank you so much for the question. I look forward to visiting you in your riding on Friday.

What we need to realize is that our health care system is changing, and as a result of these changes, we need to ensure that everyone can work at the full scope. That's why we're enabling, through this legislation, nurse practitioners to become clinical directors of long-term-care homes. The reason for that is because we know that some homes in the north have trouble recruiting doctors to fill these positions. I always say that we have to work as a team. This is not about turf war. This is about enabling the right practitioner into these roles. Evidence shows that when nurse practitioners are in the homes, outcomes of residents improve drastically. I think it's about working hand in hand—physicians and nurse practitioners together—and enabling these changes so that nurse practitioners can serve as clinical directors.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to the Minister of Long-Term Care. She has done some great work in Sudbury, especially when it comes to Countryside long-term-care home, which has struggled in the past. I had a friend there who had dementia. So I appreciate her comments about dementia care.

Recently, the member from Nickel Belt and I sent a letter to the minister about the OINP program. What happens is, international students come, they work in long-term care, their process is delayed and they're not able to continue to work. The minister would know first-hand the hassles this caused for long-term care, because they invest in the training, but also for the clientele—those with dementia especially—having high changeover.

1720

Is your ministry working on resolving this so that we can provide that pipeline of workers but also have that continuity of care for those patients?

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Thank you—a very important question.

As you know, the temporary worker permits are issued by the federal government. We do have some homes, especially in the north, that do hire a substantive amount of their staff by accessing these temporary work permits. So we are working together with the federal government and, of course, our minister responsible for immigration, to really get to the table and see what we can do collectively to help to enable our long-term care homes to actually hire these staff full-time.

But these kinds of conversations—because they involve several levels of government and, of course we as a government do not have jurisdiction on immigration and those work permits—take time. We are aware of the issue. We are having these conversations, but I will update you as soon as I have more info.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

MPP Paul Vickers: My question is to my fellow member from Whitby.

OSAP is meant to give students the opportunity to pursue education and training to prepare for rewarding careers. It is not meant to pad the pockets of predatory individuals. Unfortunately, our government has uncovered bad actors who were taking advantage of the system for personal gain.

Can you explain how this legislation would stop bad actors like this in their tracks and ensure every OSAP dollar is going to hard-working students?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for that question.

OSAP is there to give students access to education and training that prepares them for the workforce. You would expect that. I think we all expect that. Students and taxpayers need to know that institutions receiving this funding are meeting clear standards.

We're proposing stronger requirements for institutions to verify student identity and enrolment, along with higher performance requirements for graduation and employment outcomes. We would also introduce mandatory audits when certain thresholds are met, so that we can identify concerns earlier. We would also set limits on the Ontario portion of OSAP-funded enrolment at private institutions and, importantly, hold institutions—not only students—liable for OSAP misuse.

In addition, Speaker, we're proposing stronger oversight of ownership changes, so that suitability, financial capacity—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Just a quick question to the Minister of Long-Term Care.

I know in Sioux Lookout we have a 20-bed extended care facility at the Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win Health Centre, and it serves Sioux Lookout, Lac Seul, Pickle Lake and the First Nations surrounding Sioux Lookout. But there's always a long wait-list for these long-term-care facilities, and most times 30% to 35% of the beds in the hospital are used by ALC patients.

Just a quick question to the minister: Can you point me to any specific measures in this bill that will address that problem?

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Thank you for that question.

As the member knows, we have a capital funding program which is not in this bill, but which has been discussed at length, for example, in estimates. Through the capital funding program, Sioux Lookout is in the pipeline to receive, I believe, 96 new long-term care spaces or beds in the community.

We were proud to flow, I believe it was, $1.2 million for a planning grant to begin the work, which is well above what regular long-term care homes receive for the planning grant.

I'm sure that the community is using that money very wisely, working on their drawings, and working on all their due diligence so we can move that project forward. I really look forward to the next steps and hopefully one day

coming to Sioux Lookout myself, so we can have a nice groundbreaking.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. Adil Shamji: My question is for any of the members on the government side who spoke. It is in regard to schedule 14, the changes to the Ontario Career Colleges Act.

I would like to draw the members' attention to section 55.1(1), which excludes any member of the executive council or former member of the executive council from any causes of action or liability, specifically in regard to "any alleged neglect, default or other omission in the exercise" of their duty.

Why do any of the members believe that they need to be excused from any personal liability, and what exactly are they afraid of?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you to my colleague for the question.

Speaker, what's clear is that through our legislation, we're strengthening accountability to ensure anyone who intends to abuse our OSAP system for personal gain is held to the full extent of the law. With this legislation, our government would better protect OSAP from misuse, enforce stronger penalties against wrongdoers and stop bad actors in their tracks. We will pursue all avenues to return fraudulently used funding to the taxpayers.

What our investigators have uncovered at private post-secondary institutions is absolutely outrageous. We're talking about allegations of third parties completing coursework, final exams finished in as little as six minutes and students who could not even name their own school or program.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I would like to ask the member for Whitby—Ontario's post-secondary institutions are preparing students for rewarding careers. Can you explain how the measures in this bill will further that goal?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you to the member from Sarnia–Lambton for that question.

What's clear is that private institutions and career colleges play an important role in Ontario's post-secondary system, and students deserve confidence in the education and training they receive. We all expect that.

Over the past two years, targeted investigations have identified serious allegations of OSAP misuse, including third parties completing coursework, entire courses being completed in a single day and final exams being finished in as little as six minutes. Speaker, that's why we brought in KPMG to conduct a broader audit, referred the matter to the OPP and notified the Auditor General of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): We move to further debate.

Mr. Chris Glover: It's an honour to rise today and speak to Bill 148, the protecting the Minister of Colleges and Universities from his own massive screw-up act, 2026.

There are three topics I'm going to be addressing here: OSAP, children's aid and long-term care. The unifying theme of all these topics is that they're all about screw-ups that happened because the government has been privatizing our services.

The OSAP screw-up is because this government has been divesting and bankrupting our public colleges and universities and giving all kinds of support to private career colleges. And then what happens? It turns out those private career colleges are actually defrauding taxpayers to the tune of a billion dollars a year. So then the government needs to pass a bill to protect themselves from lawsuits.

It's the same with long-term care. This government—actually, it started a while ago. It started under the Harris government, the privatization of long-term-care homes. It led to the actual exploitation of seniors in care by successive governments.

The other one is children's aid. Children's aid is an absolute disaster. We need to bring it back completely under the public system and make sure that children in care are being looked after.

There's a pattern here too because the government privatizes services or gives all kinds of taxpayer money to private services, and then what ends up happening is a massive scandal. There's a financial scandal. There's a humane disaster, a disaster for people. Then the government needs to cover it up.

The way they cover it up is—they've managed the messaging really well. Last week, the government announced that they were going to be introducing legislation that, if passed, would strengthen oversight enforcement of private post-secondary institutions in the OSAP system and provide new tools to protect students and taxpayers. Okay, remember that—"protect students"—because I want to come back to that.

1730

Let's just review this OSAP scandal that we've been talking about in the Legislature here for the last month, as more and more revelations have come out. This OSAP scandal is a screw-up of epic proportions, even for this government that had an $8.3-billion greenbelt scandal, a $2.2-billion Therme spa scandal, the skills development—$800 million in taxpayer money went to Conservative donors, including $10 million that went to the friend of the Premier who owns a strip club, and that $10 million was to pay for staff training. Even compared to those other scandals, this is a screw-up of epic proportions.

When this government took over in 2018, the private career colleges and their students were receiving $179 million in OSAP funding each year. Two years ago, that number hit $500 million. A year ago, last year, it hit a billion dollars; that is more than the combined OSAP for all of the public colleges and universities in the province of Ontario. So how did the government not notice that something may be amiss when they are suddenly being charged and they're giving out a billion dollars in OSAP funding to these private career colleges?

The thing that may have put the blinders on their eyes is that, at the same time that they were handing out the OSAP money, they were also getting donations to the

Conservative Party at these $1,500 fundraiser dinners that the Premier has all the time and all the Conservative members have all the time.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Say it's not so.

Mr. Chris Glover: Oh, no, no, it is so. And that was to the tune of $150,000 that they got from executives of the private career colleges.

So they got $150,000 in donations to the Conservative Party, and in exchange, in the one year, they gave a billion dollars in OSAP funding to these private career colleges and turned a blind eye to the fact that there's no way that that could be legitimate.

Then the government realizes, "Wow, we've got a problem here." So what does the government do? The first thing they do is they think, "Well, we've got to stop bleeding all this money, so we're going to cut off all OSAP to all students in all private career colleges."

This means that students who have quit jobs to go back to school—they had taken on tuition fees, are paying tuition fees and are responsible for tuition fees of sometimes $25,000 a year, because these private career colleges are not in it for the students; most of them are in it because they want to make a profit off of the students. So they've got this legal liability.

Then, the government says, in the middle of the semester, "Hey, we're going to cut off your OSAP" to all of these students, not just students that may be committing fraud or institutions that may be committing fraud. They're doing a blanket cut-off of OSAP in the middle of the semester.

And then, they realize, "Well, you know, this is going to really massively mess up thousands of students' lives." Basically, the government had a contract with these students: These students were promised OSAP to pay for their education. In the middle of the semester, the government cuts off that OSAP, and the students can't continue that education, so all of the costs that they've incurred—they could potentially sue the government for breach of contract.

So the government is thinking, "Wow, we've got to do something about this." After all, their message, their media release last week said that they want to protect students. But then, instead of protecting the students, they introduce legislation this week that protects the Minister of Colleges and Universities from lawsuits—and the government as well—from all of the harm that they're causing, for all of the potential breach of contract liability that they may have on this.

MPP Jamie West: You'd think they'd fire him.

Mr. Chris Glover: You'd think they'd fire the Minister of Colleges and Universities for a billion-dollar screw-up—and it's not just a billion dollars; that was just one year. The year before, it was $500 million, and God knows what it is this year. It's just incredible. You'd think that that Minister of Colleges and Universities—you'd think that he might get fired, but that's not the pattern with this government.

In fact, another one of the ministers this summer was caught spending $15,000 on Toronto hotels, when he lives in Toronto. He came up with all kinds of weird excuses about what he was doing with those hotels, and I won't go into the details, but if you look on the Twitter account, there are lots of comments and speculation about what's happening there. Then he also spent $100,000 on fancy dinners—lobster dinners, oysters, steak dinners at very fancy, high-end restaurants—and so, in shame, in July, he had to step down from the cabinet.

Then the government, a month ago, decided, well, he's done his penance and he's learned his lesson. So now he's the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, so he just got promoted back into the cabinet. It's pretty incredible how this government—

MPP Jamie West: Thank goodness it's not a new scandal with the same guy.

Mr. Chris Glover: Oh, there are enough scandals on that side to go around. I'll tell you, they make the Liberals look like an efficient, scandal-free government. All the Liberals had was the gas plants and the Ornge and—

Ms. Catherine Fife: The OPP—

Mr. Chris Glover: —and the OPP scandal, yes. I mean, $1 billion to shut down gas plants that they had half-built—at least when the Liberal scandals came up, they were embarrassed. These guys—you are normalizing it. This government is normalizing scandals and the waste of our tax dollars.

I mentioned that the government strategy—this is how they still are so high in the polls, because it certainly is not on their record. The numbers in this province—the employment record, the constant scandals, the waste of our taxpayer dollars, that they're bankrupting our schools, our colleges, our universities and our hospitals—all of these things while running up a half-a-trillion-dollar debt? That's not why they're high in the polls. But they really manage the messaging well. Last week, they get out ahead of this; they put out this news release saying, "Hey, we're going to put out a new bill that's going to protect students and prevent further fraud in the colleges and universities." Really, it's just a bill to protect the minister.

At the same time, the other thing that the Premier does is he punches down on people all the time. Just last week, he was talking about university students. He's punched down on university and college students, post-secondary students over the last year. He said that when it turned out that the OSAP system was becoming unsustainable—instead of talking about the billion-dollar fraud that was making it unsustainable, he blamed the students. He said the students are taking basket-weaving courses, that they are using money on buying fancy watches and cologne. This week, he said that the post-secondary students who are complaining about all of the debt that's being downloaded onto them through the OSAP changes—he said that they should give their head a shake. And this from a Premier punching down on these students—this from a Premier who attended college for six months and then went to work in his daddy's business.

MPP Jamie West: No.

Mr. Chris Glover: Yes, I know. It's really offensive the way the Premier does continue to punch down, but it's

a good distraction. It's a good distraction from the fact that he should really be firing the Minister of Colleges and Universities for this billion-dollar scandal. That's what he should be doing.

The solution—I just want to talk about solutions here for a minute. Can the government please invest our tax dollars into our public colleges and universities that have helped to built Ontario into the most educated population, the most educated workforce anywhere in the world? It's kind of ironic because the public colleges in this province were built by Bill Davis when he was the Minister of Education, a Conservative minister, in the 1960s. But this government is of a different ideology: Anything that's public, they want to privatize it, they want to break it up, they want to sell it off. And so that's what they're doing: They're bankrupting our colleges. We've lost 10,000 staff from our colleges in the last year. Hundreds and hundreds of programs have been cut, including really valuable programs that provide workplace training for skills that we are going to need in our economy.

I would say, invest in our public colleges and universities instead of bankrupting them, and don't invest in private career colleges because they're constantly scandal-ridden. We should be investing in public colleges and universities.

1740

The next topic I wanted to talk about is the children's aid society, and this is a more serious issue. There was a report that came out a year ago—it was ready a year ago—by KPMG, an investigation into children's aid societies. The Premier—again, it's the same pattern of punching down. The Premier accused the children's aid societies of all kinds of—what he was saying is, hearing "nightmare stories" of agencies misusing taxpayer dollars instead of properly funding care. He said they were building Taj Mahals.

The KPMG report came out, and there's another report by children's aid, and what we have evidence of now is an absolute disaster, a humanitarian disaster that's taking place among the most vulnerable children in our province. These are children who have been put into care because their own parents or their own guardians have given them up or are not able to look after them. This is where the government becomes the parent of these children, and these children are being horribly mistreated in care.

This is what the report says, and I'll just read a quote about the children's aid societies: They've "increasingly housed vulnerable children and youth in unlicensed spaces—including sleeping on futons and cots in agency offices—because there's a severe, province-wide shortage of foster homes and specialized care beds. Between April 2023 and March 2024 alone, 339 children and teens in Ontario protection were placed in unlicensed settings such as offices, motels and short-term rentals."

The Toronto Star has a report about a 10-year-old boy who spent most of this current year "living in an office at the children's aid society in a small town in southwestern Ontario. For eight months, he slept on a futon in a make-shift bedroom with a sink and a fridge. Paid staff watched over him and brought him meals. School was a room down the hall with a computer for virtual learning."

This is a child that is in the care of the province of Ontario, the government of Ontario, and this is the care that this child got. It's just appalling. The child never even got a chance to go to school for the whole year, a 10-year-old. And virtual learning for a 10-year-old—can you imagine? Anybody who's ever raised kids—a 10-year-old child cannot sit and watch a computer and learn from a computer for six hours a day, every day. It just doesn't happen. The child basically missed a year of their own education.

Other reports: "In Windsor, 13 kids and youth with complex needs are living in unlicensed settings, including a teen in a budget hotel and a 10-year-old child who sleeps in the local children's aid society office; earlier this year, the region had six teenagers in hotels. In Sarnia-Lambton, near the south shore of Lake Huron, three teens are living in Airbnbs staffed around the clock by child protection workers and … caregivers."

Those are particular incidents, but the stats bear this out. The number of serious safety incidents for kids in care has nearly doubled. Incidents of exploitation, such as sex trafficking, increased by 33% and assaults are up 18%, and most of these incidents occurred with private foster or group home providers. A child in care dies every three days in Ontario.

One of the doctors—one of my colleagues who was speaking said, mercifully, it's very rare for a child to die. That a child in care is dying every three days speaks to a horrible case of neglect by the province of Ontario, by this government.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You're the parent.

Mr. Chris Glover: Yes, exactly. When a child is given up to a children's aid society, the government of Ontario becomes the parent and the guardian of that child.

It also said that nearly two thirds of children's aid societies are in some form of financial distress. They just don't have the money to do what they need do, and they don't have the money to get ahead of it because they're always working behind the scenes. They're trying to respond to the immediate crisis that they've got rather than investing in group homes and supportive housing that the children are going to need. The average cost of these out-of-place homes has increased from $32,000 to $50,000. It's not even that the government is not investing money; they're not investing it wisely in developing a plan and providing supportive housing for these children. That's what this government really needs to do.

The other thing that came up in these reports is that a lot of parents of children with intellectual disabilities and complex needs cannot manage on their own. They don't get enough government support, staffing support, to keep

their children, so they surrender children through the children's aid society.

The solutions: First of all, the government needs to take responsibility for the crisis. In question period, sometimes they'll blame the former Liberal government or they'll blame the NDP. This government has been in power for almost nine years. This is your crisis. This is your legacy. This government needs to fix it.

They also need to provide support for children with complex needs, intellectual disabilities, behavioural issues so that those children can stay with their families. That will be cheaper in the long run, if you actually provide those supports.

Then you need to create public, not-for-profit group homes with permanent staff so children in care have supportive homes to live in.

Finally, they need to provide the funding the children's aid society needs to invest to get over this crisis, because this is an absolute crisis of care for these children.

This bill doesn't do much for reforming the children's aid society. I hope the government actually takes this like the emergency it is and addresses the care of these children who are being horribly neglected in children's aid.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions? I recognize the member from Carleton.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Excuse me—I'm sorry I have to interrupt, but the member from Carleton is not in his seat.

I look for questions, please.

Mr. John Jordan: One of things this government has done very well is to address a neglected long-term-care system that was left to us in 2018 by the Liberals supported by the NDP.

One of those was, we set the highest standards in the country. We doubled the number of investigators so that those standards would be maintained and we would ensure compliance. This bill further strengthens the accountability by legislating timely investigation. Would the member like to comment on that?

Mr. Chris Glover: For a Conversative MPP to stand up in this Legislature and boast about your record on long-term care—you guys are sacrificing seniors for profit. You did it the last time you were in government. The last time the Conservatives were in power, for the first time, they used taxpayer dollars to build private, for-profit, long-term-care homes. And those private, for-profit, long-term-care homes—they've been funding them, and then some of those homes end up with horrible abuse.

The Toronto Star, during the pandemic, reported that if you were in a private, for-profit, long-term-care home—rather than a public, not-for-profit one—you were four times as likely to get COVID and twice as likely to die from it. Those are the statistics. The military got called in, and they found seniors who died of thirst because there was nobody to bring them a glass of water in those long-term-care homes.

Again, it's a crisis. This government always supports private, for-profit—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to my colleague. He spoke so well about the variety of scandals—this screw-up of epic proportions I think is an excellent example.

I had an image when he described the $150,000 worth of donations that came in that maybe one of the reasons the minister of post-secondary education didn't see all the hundreds and hundreds of complaints that were coming in is because as he was carrying the donations, they were spilling on his desk, and he just couldn't see them.

I fail to understand. With something like this, you've wrecked people's lives. You've damaged these institutions. I'm not talking about the ones that were bad; I'm talking about the ones that did nothing wrong, and they shut them all down—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Through the Speaker, please.

1750

MPP Jamie West: Thank you, Speaker.

The damage that they did—then they make a press conference saying, "We're going to fix all of this." They rush back here excitedly to help the people, and they say, "The way we're going to fix this is we're going to protect you from suing me." How does this make any sense to you?

Mr. Chris Glover: It makes total sense, because this is the MO of this government. Remember when, during the pandemic, there was this crisis in long-term care, and it started getting to the media? So, the Premier said, "I'm going to build an iron ring around these long-term-care homes to protect seniors." And what did they do? They passed legislation that prevented families from suing these private, for-profit long-term-care homes for the neglect that often led to the death of their seniors and their family members.

So now, when they're caught with this billion-dollar fraud scandal in our OSAP, the government's response is to cut off OSAP to all these students and then to pass legislation that will prevent these students from suing for breach-of-contract.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Carleton.

MPP George Darouze: Thanks, I'm now in my seat. I want to ask a question to the member opposite. After he spoke for 10 minutes—seven minutes had nothing to do with the bill, and finally, he came back to the last three minutes to talk a little bit about the bill. You know, maybe he should do some research. Under the leadership of our Minister of Long-Term Care alone, last year in the summer in Ottawa, she visited me a couple of times on Fridays, her and I. And every Friday, you and I flipped the ground for almost 300 each time, so that's over 700 beds. Thank you very much for that.

But finally, you spoke a little bit about social workers and social services. Our government is proposing an

amendment to the Social Work and Social Service Work Act to require mandatory—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Question, please.

MPP George Darouze: —suspension on revocation of registration when findings of sexual abuse are made. Can the member explain why they would—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Thank you.

I recognize the member from Spadina–Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: See, one of the games that the government plays in this Legislature is, "Oh, the NDP voted against this. They voted against this." I mean, we voted against—and then they'll mention something in the budget, and the budget—we vote against the budget because the budget for the last number of years has been designed to bankrupt our schools, colleges, hospitals and universities. So, of course, we vote against the budget.

And then they'll say, "Oh, but we wanted more money for firefighting." But they didn't actually—you know. But we have to vote against the whole bill.

This whole bill—of course, this bill, you know—are we going to vote so that the government can indemnify themselves for the crisis that they are creating, and the lives that they are destroying through this sudden OSAP cut-off because they didn't notice the fraud until it hit a billion dollars? If you were an independent, would you be voting for this bill? I think not.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member for Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I want to thank my colleague for really shining a light on all the weaknesses of this bill. As the critic for seniors and long-term care, there are some areas of concern, but I'm going to work with the minister and we're going to try to figure some of these things out. Some of them are very concerning.

But I will say, as a mother, to learn that the CAS had to have a situation where a teenager lived in a shed for two consecutive periods, Speaker, without access to education—clearly, basic human rights here were denied this youth. Though when the Premier said that CAS has their Taj Mahal, their administrative burden is heavy, this clearly has been disproved by the government's own report.

What does the member say around this—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Spadina–Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: You know, all three of the things that we're talking about—long-term care, children's aid society and OSAP—it all has to do with privatization, privatization of services.

If you have a private, for-profit agency, their focus is on profit. That's the same with long-term care. In the children's aid society, a lot of people are actually exploiting these children in order to make a profit. We really need to get profit out of it and invest—I used to work in a group home with 12 children with intellectual disabilities, and it was a wonderful place. It's a model we used to have; we used to be building these and setting these up. It was in the middle of Scarborough and it was just a regular house, but there were 12 kids there and there was a number of us staff who looked after those kids.

We know how to look after children who are vulnerable, but the government needs to do it the right way, and that's to focus away from profit onto the children.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Carleton.

MPP George Darouze: We keep talking about the bill, and they keep changing the topic about what we are proposing.

Our government is proposing the authority to establish penalties for those who contravene restrictions on publishing protected facility information. Can the member explain why they would oppose meaningful consequences for those who disclose sensitive locations and put vulnerable individuals at risk?

Mr. Chris Glover: Of course, we wouldn't oppose that. The problem is, if we have to vote for this, we can't vote for one section of the bill. We have to vote for the whole bill or reject the whole bill.

The main purpose of this bill is to indemnify the Minister of Colleges and Universities for the billion-dollar scandal that he created. Then the question is: Do you vote for that or not vote for that? If we could break down the bill—this is one of the games the government plays. This is what, 18 schedules in this bill? So there are 18 different things in it, and we can either vote for all of the 18 or none of the 18, but we don't have choice to pick and choose—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): We have time for a quick question.

MPP Jamie West: The member said that every three days, a child dies in care. What would we do if there was a parent and their child died every three days?

Mr. Chris Glover: Anything that it took. I mean, children—it's just so appalling to me that this is happening.

You know that that 10-year-old boy stayed for 10 months in an office, sleeping on a futon and being put in front of a computer for six hours a day, pretending that was school. It's just appalling. The government—take some action. You know what we need to do. We need to provide care for these children.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. Adil Shamji: I'm pleased to rise today to share my reflections on Bill 148, and I must begin—you know, the first question that came to my mind as I reviewed this legislation was why it contains so many disparate areas of policy in a single bill. I actually think that I've figured it out.

On the one hand, it has got a number of measures addressing career colleges. On the other hand, it has got a number of measures addressing health care workers and expanding scope of practice. When this government missed the mark on career colleges—allowed a number of bad actors to continue operating; and then was caught red-handed; and then, all of a sudden, shut off access to career colleges—essentially what it did is it prevented a large number of health care workers who obtained their education in career colleges from being able to continue their education.

So in one fell swoop, they have created the circumstances to worsen our health care crisis, and they're trying to address their career college issues in this legislation. And until they can actually get their act together, they're trying to tinker around the edges and improve scope of practice for health care workers. Unfortunately, what they are proposing to do is too little, too late.

In my brief moments for remarks right now, I'll begin to touch on some of the health care changes that are contained herein.

For example, in schedule 1, there is an expansion of the scope of practice of audiologists and speech-language pathologists, which is of course something that I support. But it is, as usual, tinkering around the edges. It allows for only the application of prescribed forms of energy, not the prescription of applied forms of energy—and here, to be clear, we're talking about ultrasound.

The kinds of ultrasound that an audiologist or a speech-language pathologist might be asked to perform are relatively limited. What would have made a difference is if this legislation allowed them to order swallow studies, which is something that the government has been talking about for some time but has failed to implement. So it is a microscopic, incremental step in the right direction, completely missing out on the full potential that this legislation could have had.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I'm sorry to interrupt the member, but the time is now 6 o'clock. It is time for private members' public business.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

Report continues in volume B.

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